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Evaluating community projects

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- 2 NOV 1999

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Abstract

Evaluating community projects Green VR 1998 University of Durham

Evaluating community projects seeks to explore the questions- what do users get out of community projects? what do projects achieve? how can we find this out?

The study places community projects within a theoretical and historical context and examines participation in relation to involvement of users at different levels in projects. It explores different approaches to evaluation - experimental, American management, participatory and critical and looks at what implications these different approaches have for the meshing or otherwise of different interests. Examples from the case study of evaluation in a community project are threaded through the sections of the chapter on methods of evaluation. These sections are - measurement of intangibles, monitoring and indicators and participatory evaluation. Measurement of intangibles looks at how criteria for evaluation can be set against a background not only of criteria that might have to be negotiated but also concepts which are hard to break down into specifics. The section on monitoring looks at what information we need to gather, in what format from which source and also at project specific indicators. The last section of this chapter examines appropriate methods for participatory evaluation and how far this type of evaluation could be used in a project setting. The conclusion offers an expedient, loose framework for evaluation (as part of the process), which whilst situation specific offers possibilities for adaptation.

Evaluating community projects

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Acknowledgements

With special thanks to Doris, Lesley, and Sheila for their ideas, time and energy. This whole study is a reflection on an evaluation carried out in a specific project. Lesley and I designed and carried out three experiential sessions for project users to think around basic research skills in relation to evaluation within the project (aims, objectives, indicators, process, different sorts of information and different ways of finding the information out). Her thinking in this matter had been influenced by completing a Skills in Community Research NVQ designed by Save the Children. All three of the above helped to design, pilot, and re-design the interview sheets in the Appendix. The core of this study grew from the fact that in the light of reality the initial stance on participatory evaluation had to be amended. Reflection on the reasons for this is my own but could not have occurred without the willingness of all of the above to share their experience and skills in the first place.

Thanks also to Dot, Clare, Sharon, Maxine and Jimmy and all others took part in the case study project. Thanks to my supervisor Dr.Sarah Banks and to Andrew, Steven and Sophie for their varied support. Thanks to Kieran McKeown, Tim May, Dianne Osborne, May Pettigrew and Suzanne Speak for the odd discussion along the way and to Jean for her formatting.

In memory of Vivien, my sister

Introduction



Introduction

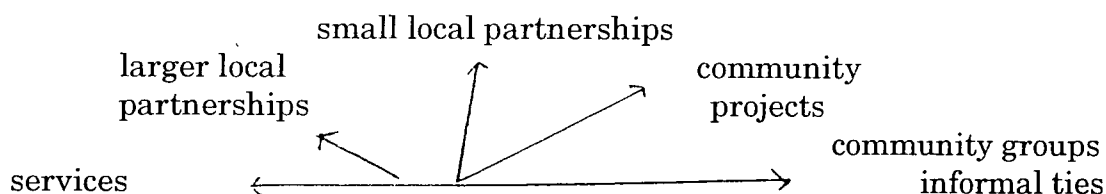
‘The absence of an authentic people’s point of view remains a serious limitation on how we define social development’
Rahman (1993 p.205)

A lot of the small scale community projects with which I have worked over the last twenty years, no longer exist. Some have continued in a slightly different form, others have closed down. This reflects partly changes in needs that the projects meet, partly the changing focus of social justice and perhaps most significantly the short term nature of funding for community projects. This could describe a dynamic and flexible sphere, constantly mutating and evolving. It could also reflect a number of inadequately funded piecemeal initiatives, which have short term effects. Some projects surmount all these changes, to emerge streamlined to take on new challenges. One of the biggest challenges facing community projects is how to grow at an appropriate pace to fully involve users in the decision-making process. As funding has become increasingly targeted, so more evidence is needed of the project’s ability to meet pre-set milestones (often self set). Placing projects within a dynamic and flexible sphere, the ability to meet these milestones and continue to involve users in management, becomes a balancing act, serving more than one agenda.

This study started from the questions - what is really going on in these projects? what do local people get out of them? why are there so many conflicts? Are people really empowered by involvement in decision-making? All questions that routinely arise for workers in projects. Many people including myself have deeply held convictions and feel they are working towards a world where there will be greater social justice. The fact that interpretations of social justice differ leads to a diversity of projects, which may address the same problem from different slants and different deeply held views within one and the same project. These different views express themselves in different agendas - within one project there will be the agendas of a range of users, the management committee, which may or may not include users, workers, the agency it

self and those of other agencies in day to day contact with the project. Figure A below sites projects within a continuum from services to informal associational links or vice versa in order to illustrate the movement from the domination of the agenda of professionals to the domination of the agenda of community groups.

Figure A



Moving clockwise from the left, the level of participation at all levels gradually increases. It is probably true to say that the level of resources over which to have any decision-making power gradually decreases (in the same direction). Services are clear - consumer feedback is required, and whilst moves have been made towards more user involvement in service development and delivery (for instance in relation to Care in the Community), these usually express themselves in smaller local partnerships, where for example, a social services department and/or health authority may work with a charity and local people. Chanan's (1991 p.9) typology of voluntary organisations also includes professionally run volunteer using organisations, umbrella groups and support projects and professional non-profit organisations, such as housing associations and some training schemes. These are not included separately in Figure A and are more akin to support services as they do not grow from a progression from community groups through partnerships but vice versa. Some umbrella organisations have however grown organically from networks of projects. Chanan (1991) also points out it is the services run by professional non-profit bodies that receive a very disproportionate amount of the total funding available to voluntary organisations in the social welfare field. Large local partnerships are also now able to attract substantial amounts of funding from for example the Single Regeneration

Budget. Research on partnerships McGregor et al (1996) and Lloyd (1996) suggests that substantial pre-partnership activity is required to assist the community to participate as a key partner. It is also possible that funds, previously available only to services are now only available to services which enter into partnerships.

The arena of stakeholders (those with an interest, see p.45) with different agendas is most apparent in large and to some extent small local partnerships. In setting criteria for evaluation, how will these agendas be meshed? The area that this study relates to is that of small scale community projects, usually extended from mutual aid or self-help groups (single parents, young disabled, health, play). The majority of community groups, covering all areas of life's activity, including recreation, politics and religion (see Willmott 1989 p.25, Chanan 1992 p.47, Elsdon et al 1998 p.42), continue to establish and reform themselves with and without a range of structures (community associations, member groups, informal, collective) without any outside input. Knight and Hayes (1981) identified 18 community groups within two London areas, with a population of 8000 and 5000 respectively. The groups for one area covered community arts group, pensioners association, community centre, drop-in for boys, befriending project, under fives group, nursery, play association and residents action group. For the other a tenants and community association, visiting the elderly project, discussion club, youth action group and adventure playground (recreation, politics and religion not included, also local branches of national organisations omitted). They refer to the origins of the groups: two of the eighteen formed by people directly affected by the problem; the others by a mix of professional community work, clergymen and community activists(not of the area although possibly resident). Willmott (1989) splits what he terms 'community initiatives' into three groupings: those that are based on mutual aid, those that represent interests and those that provide a service.

Whilst there has been a paternalist tradition of the beneficiary being different to the donor, there has also been a socialist/radical tradition of mutual aid and solidarity. Some of the structures of the paternalist tradition, such as that of trustees of a charity, are perhaps not best suited to small charities, where users are progressively involved in the management. At the present time, there are moves towards partnership organisations to attract SRB and European Social Fund monies and for some the partnership approach itself is seen as more holistic an answer to problems within an area. Some smaller organisations are looking at becoming service providers, which can entail a massive shift in responsibilities for their organisation.

The vast majority of community activity lies within the area of community groups. Professionalism within the field of social welfare leads to the creation of different agendas. The level of knowledge and commitment required by a local representative to a partnership body is really very high. I don't think adequate attention has been paid to what people get out of projects, because we, the workers, have an overlapping but different agenda. This study seeks to explore different facets of the project world and looks at how to assess their impact. The case study takes the form of an evaluation which is then used to illustrate different points. It was also a learning process in relation to how to carry out a more appropriate evaluation.

The exploration of the topic is by naturalistic inquiry. I did not really know what people got out of a project. I felt there was an agenda gap between my perceptions of what was being achieved and those of local people and also that funding applications needed to be slanted in a manner that related more to my agenda than that of beneficiaries. Initially my own values and understanding of the topic led me to a preference for participatory evaluation and it was only when I began to understand that evaluation itself and possibly participation (different understandings of the word) were from a different agenda to what users get out of projects, that I switched to a more naturalistic form of inquiry.

(Can a participatory stance be viewed as a constraint? see p.49). One case study can only be exploratory. Stake (1995 p.136) suggests ‘ the study is an opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage to the best of our interpretive powers and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for those things we cherish.’

I was fortunate to take Russian as an initial degree and to spend three months in Communist Russia as part of my course. I also spent some time on a kibbutz before going to university. I have been a long term member of the Labour party (not very active) and a founder member of a community co-operative. In some ways this study arose from a desire to reflect on ideals in relation to experience. Experience brings expedience (what is possible now in this situation in this context) and also an element of compromise.

The format of the study is as follows: Chapter One further explores the theoretical and historical base of community projects to create a context. Chapter Two looks at participation, one of the main elements upon which projects are built - why do we seek to involve users in managing projects? are there different meanings to participation? what are users participating in? Chapter Three looks at the theory behind different models of evaluation. Are they exclusive? How do they colour our views? Chapter Four is really a literature review of work relating to evaluation and community projects (as one expression of community work) and also looks at world views that inform community work, in order to explore what we might be evaluating. Chapter Five is about methods in relation to evaluation including an overview relating methods to models. In Part One, the case study evaluation is described and reflected upon as it is used to illustrate the other parts. Part Two is a methods overview, looking at what methods might be relevant to different models of evaluation. Part Three is about the measurement of intangibles- what is it we are measuring? who should be involved in the production of criteria for evaluation? how do we measure process? the process of what?; Part

Four deals with monitoring and indicators; Part Five with participatory evaluation. These are illustrated with examples taken from the case study. Whilst understanding that evaluation will be situation specific and also has uses as a political tool, the conclusion draws strands from the different models and offers a loose framework of useful evaluation, that meets projects' twin needs to inform themselves and funders, and also takes into account the practical pressures of implementation and commitment. This is a framework woven into the process of the project. There is also a suggestion that projects themselves may not be the best vehicle for a participatory process as they create their own demands, which may become different from the natural energy focus and interest of users.

Billis (1993 p.164) comments that this leads to 'tension between 'formal' characteristics of the bureaucratic world and the more 'informal' characteristics of associational and personal worlds'. It also leads to the creation of different agendas.

Chapter One

Theoretical and historical context of community projects

Chapter One

Theoretical and historical context of community projects

This study looks at how best to evaluate the outcomes of small-scale community projects that seek to involve users in their management and running. I would therefore like to clarify what I mean by a 'small scale community project'. A lot of these small projects exist mostly as voluntary organisations, employing one or two full-time workers, with a range of casual sessional workers and outside tutors, the former, often being drawn from past users of the service/process of the project. A project is an organisation with a specific aim (which may be a sub-aim) that has been made or is in the process of being made concrete. To arrive at this stage implies a management structure, constitution, funding or the likelihood of funding and clear aims. There is also something of an experimental or one off nature about a project (although some projects are long established). A sub-section of a larger organisation could be termed a project for example if the Scouts or Citizens Advice Bureau were to set up a new branch in an area, this would not be referred to as a project but if they aimed to set up a specific and discrete new venture (say Scouts into the Millenium) or to look at what impact setting up a credit union or a food cooperative within an area had, these might then be referred to as projects. Not all projects are centre-based in their activity, though a lot are, if only to hold meetings or house a worker.

A 'community' project locates a project within either a specific locality or a community of interest. Sometimes there will be an overlap of the two, for instance, the project has been set up to support young women with children, living on a specific estate. There are numerous overlapping threads within the term 'community' and the projects themselves express a hybrid of approaches from social welfare to community action. I propose to argue that community projects which have the capacity to involve local residents/users (those who would often be excluded from decision-making) to the greatest degree are voluntary organisations with multi-funding. In

order to place these projects, that seek to involve users in their management, in context, I would like to look at the meanings of the word 'community' and at the different strands of mutual aid, self-help, and participation and empowerment that are their make-up.

Communities of place and of interest

'Each neighbourhood is a site for a multitude of networks, interests and identities, which help determine how people see the place they live' (Elias 1974 xiii)

Looking at the array of literature around 'community', it would seem that our common understanding of the word refers to the 'mythical remnants of the romantic model' (Stacey 1969) and 'has remained to some extent associated with the hope and wish of reviving once more the closer, warmer, more harmonising type of bonds, people vaguely attributed to past ages' (Elias 1974 xiii) This view of community stems from Tonnies (1955) with his ideas of 'community' and 'association'. Community being based round 'blood and soil' (Hoggett 1997 p.4) involving kinship, neighbourhood and friendship, connected to place. It also implies a more local structure than 'association'. Mayo (1994 p.49) looks at the evolution of the word from its 16th Century meaning, referring to 'the quality of having something in common.'

As society has become more pluralist - people moving more, working and living in different areas, increase in ethnic minority composition of the population - people's social networks may depend more on communities of interest or of common need, which may overlap living within the same area. Hoggett (1997 p.8) suggests 'Identities are constantly shifting and mutating as the groups and communities such identities draw from and contribute to, change over time. He refers here to a multiplicity of groupings 'ranging from cyber-communities to car boot enthusiasts', (ibid p.8) where place becomes re- conceptualised as an identity one chooses. However this concept of communities of interest as opposed to

place comes full circle as 'new kinds of non--place communities emerge for some, the dispossessed find themselves locked into place more and more' (ibid p.15).

Jordan (1996 p.27) describes communities as 'nomadic or settled groups with more communal than private resources'. He looks at a common resource for shared activity and common interests as the pre-requisite for 'community'. Here it is defined more as a grouping, which depends on exclusion, 'the restriction of users to a limited number of members, whose activities can be monitored' (ibid p.25). I am quoting the above because I think there are definite elements of 'exclusion' within communities, which can be at odds with a concept of empowerment through participation. There is also the territorial nature of groups, especially within areas of multiple deprivation, where a group may lay clear claim to the use of a premises and defend this against outsiders (covertly and overtly). They may not be part of the community in the local area, but are as Sjoberg (1965 p.115) suggests 'a collectivity of actors, sharing in a limited territorial area as the base for carrying out the greatest share of their daily activity'. Stacey (1969 p.139) prefers the definition of community as a 'local social system' and Bott (1957p.99) suggests that for a family

'the immediate social environment is best considered not as the local area in which they live, but rather as the actual social relationships they maintain, regardless of whether these are confined to the local area or even beyond its boundaries.'

Willmott (1989 p.2) suggests a third broad category of community

'a group composed of people, sharing a common condition or problem or a common bond such as working for the same employer'

Men and women may have very different views of community and the reality of an area community for some may be division and fear, as

opposed to support and a sense of belonging. Even nowadays, women tend to have more child-care responsibilities than men, so their view of community will include who their children can play with, safe areas, others with young children. Community for the disabled will be partly limited by access. Ethnic communities may perceive the host community as hostile and reinforce their own boundaries. Going to the local shops can be harrasing for some if they are worried whether anyone will break in while they are out, or if some incident may occur on the way because of their difference. I recognise community to be a social network within an area. I include project space as 'area'. I see the project's community as one of the sub-communities in the area.

I would now like to look at the different strands in the heritage of voluntary organisations, which are quite often the form that community projects take.

Voluntary organisations

'Voluntary action in Britain covers a myriad of different activities and is undertaken from many different motives' (Wolfenden Report 1978 p.2)

Voluntary organisations as can be seen from the classification below are very various and span the whole political spectrum both in terms of area of interest, activity taken to enhance that interest and within their own structure (hierarchical to co-operative). Marshall (1996 p.48) suggests the following classification to cover the wide range of organisations -

'fundamental distinctions among voluntary organisations between religious congregations; religious charities; church-based voluntary service to the community; charitable trusts; secular voluntary service; reform groups; co-operatives and credit unions; self-help; community and sports/leisure associations ; political parties and pressure groups ; and universalist movements (green, peace, human rights, consumerist and so on.'

Marshall goes on to divide the voluntary sector into four or more sub-sectors. I am reproducing the table for this below as looking at who is doing what to whom seems to be the simplest way of clarifying possibilities in relation to possible levels of participation within community projects that are voluntary organisations.

Table 1.1
Sectors of organised action

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Criterion for allocation of action</u>	<u>Source of control</u>	<u>Contribution to social change</u>
Private	Economic: who can pay?	Market	Does not alter
Statutory	Legal: who is entitled	Government	Systemic redistribution
Religious	Moral: who is seen as deserving?	Religious group	Local redistribution
Philanthropic	Moral: who is seen as deserving?	Providers	Local redistribution
Community	Political: who can mobilise?	Beneficiaries	Empowerment
Informal	Social: who belongs?	Culture	Reproduces community

(After Marshall 1996 p.53)

It can be seen from the above that in both the religious and philanthropic sectors, the source of control is with the provider, who will be different to the beneficiary and who will use their own criteria to determine the ‘deserving’. In contrast to this, the source of control within the community sector is shown to be the beneficiaries. Historically, the voluntary sector has a tradition of religious and philanthropic bodies attempting to address the problems of an unequal society by both setting up schemes to meet perceived need amongst the deserving, staffed mainly by volunteers and of campaigning to change the law so that some of these needs would be met by the State.

There are also the traditions of community activism, labour struggle and co-operativism, whereby those who might otherwise be 'beneficiaries' band together to come up with a common response to what they see as their own need and that of others like them. Because of this emphasis on equality, the structure and methods of organisations within these traditions attempt (and quite often fall short) to reflect the equal status of those involved.. Broadly speaking, social work harks back to the first tradition base and community work to the second. Voluntary organisations have developed as a complement to mainstream provision, plugging gaps and carrying out innovative work but more recently have been pressurised to supply services, previously provided by the State.

Mutual aid and self-help

Mutual aid and self-help may in practice be the same thing but historically they seem to be linked to the two overlapping but differing traditions. Self-help seems to ally more with a social-work ethos and mutual aid with that of community work. Mutual aid carries more implications in demanding rights and has an approach that is not stigmatising i.e. a common response to a need, whereas there is an overtone of having a problem in relation to self-help. Maybe the difference is to do with the group's slant on its issue of common interest, for example, a self help group for the young disabled or a campaigning group run by the young disabled (mutual aid?).

Chanan (1992 p.143) suggests that

'Turning the receiver into giver and receiver is perhaps paradoxically, the greatest benefit that can be conferred, in that it gives the person a greater sense of reciprocity, hence of inclusion and autonomy'

Structure

Usually voluntary organisations have a fairly open core constituency, to allow them to manoeuvre over time for example ‘to benefit persons over 18 in the area of....’ but there does not seem to be an adequate structure (other than that of a co-operative) to fit an organisation that is progressively managed by users. The constitution of a charity, which is favoured by many projects because of its funding implications seems to stem from philanthropic times when those using the charity and those managing it would be different. Yet if the progression route in projects is user/member progressively involved in a process to management committee member to officer to sessional worker (via training accessed at the project) the opportunity to be involved in decision-making becomes different at this point. It seems especially relevant in relation to projects usually getting funding for work in areas of multiple deprivation and also harks back to a voluntarism, inappropriate to equal relationships with professionals and a wider constituency. Having looked at the different heritage threads of voluntary organisations that are projects, we now need to place them within a community work debate.

Why do we seek to involve users in participatory structures?

Reason (1994 p.1) says ‘a participative methodology needs to rest on a participative world view’ and community work has both depending on how the word participative is defined. Certainly the process of community work will always be participative, and the end to which this process is applied, namely that of social justice is all about greater participation. However how social justice can be affected is contested. There are strong arguments that by involving the ‘oppressed’ in issues that affect their lives, we are merely containing them. Community work theories broadly divide into pluralist theories and radical / socialist theories. The pluralist theories have the core assumption that in a pluralist society, pressure groups jockey for position and eventually accommodate each other, with

the State acting as a sort of referee. It could also be said that any theory that is based on a notion of false consciousness cannot be participatory as if we need to educate the people to understand their oppression, their initial opinions would be dismissed. Popple (1995 p.53) suggests that

‘the pluralist approach nevertheless acknowledges , the structural nature of deprivation and recognises the political dimension to community work. The focus is on micro-change since advocates of this approach believe that community work is concerned with social consensus and marginal improvements’

In practice social planning, community care, community organisation (as understood in the UK) and community development fit within a pluralist framework. In contrast to this the radical/socialist theoretical framework adopts a more structural approach, viewing poverty and deprivation as inherent within the capitalist system. Community work within this tradition would be looking to change the roots and structures of society, by developing people’s consciousness of these structures in order to influence them initially at a local level, whilst building links with other similar organisations. Community action, feminist community work, black and anti- racist community work all fit into the radical/socialist framework.

The nature of spontaneous community activism (labour struggle, tenant direct action) allies itself with the radical/socialist framework but is not stimulated from outside. Community education can be viewed as a practice within either framework, depending on its form (traditional or transformative).

The span of community work approaches is shown overleaf, moving across (left to right) from doing things to people , to people developing their own agendas and programmes and acting upon them. (After Popple 1995 pp.54 - 55)

Table 1.2

Span of Community Work approaches

Social Planning	Community Organisation	Community Development	Community Education	Feminist Black, Community work with Disabled	Community Action
--------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------	--	---------------------

In practice, some of these approaches will overlap. The process can be seen as acting at three levels:

- validation of self/with others with common need
- group acts to do something together about common need
- links to wider constituency made

For example, Taylor(1992 p.5) describes this movement in the following form

‘ Groups may have more than one objective, for example a women’s group may be set up to develop and reinforce friendship networks, but it may go on to provide mutual support and services (for example childcare). It may develop a mutual education role as the women seek to learn more about their feminist heritage and may eventually become politically active in order to give women a greater voice in society at large.’

Over the last 20 years , it has become clear that society in the UK is unlikely to respond to a Marxist analysis of deprivation and empowerment has been narrowed ‘ to the more specific and limited terms of enabling people and organisations to use more effectively the power they do have’ (Mayo1994 p.55). Historically projects that seek to involve users in their management are placed within the same history as that of community work, which is a response to different perceptions of need in society.

The next Chapter explores the meaning and span of use of the word ‘participation’ and looks at what exactly people are participating in.

Chapter Two

Participation

Chapter Two

Participation

‘Having a say’ (Management Committee member 1997)

‘In Poverty 3 participation means more than labour market integration or ‘insertion’, it is a learning process, a means for empowerment, for combating exclusion and fighting oppression; it is a political culture, a cornerstone of civil society’ (Van Rees and Rodrigues 1993 p.25)

The term participation (having a share or taking part in) along with associated terms such as community and empowerment is used to cover a range of meanings. Arnstein (1969) describes participation as ‘a little like eating spinach, no one is against it in principle because it is good for you’. However Arnstein may be assuming a certain interpretation of the nature of participation and its effects on people. I rather agree with Chambers (1983 p.141) that this (the creation of participatory structures for others) ‘is a paternalist trap from which there is no complete escape’. The community is often a stakeholder (has an interest) in the development process, may even be termed the primary stakeholder yet this term ‘stakeholder’ always strikes me as if something is being taken away , that previously you could just make you own decisions but presumably participation in general is seen as a good thing because it offers access to possibilities of decision-making that did not previously exist.

The present wide usage of the word could refer to any of the processes described by Arnstein (1969 p.217) in her ladder of citizen participation.

‘Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation

Degree of power

8. Citizen control
7. Delegated power
6. Partnership

Degree of tokenism

5. Placation
4. Consultation

3. Information

Non-participation

2. Therapy

1. Manipulation'

Nelson and Wright (1995 p.1) split the span of participation into those of ends and means

'Participation as a means (accomplishes the aims of a project more efficiently, effectively or cheaply), as opposed to participation as an end (where the community or group sets up to control its own development).'

and 'suggest (ibid p.5) that ' getting communities to decide on their own priorities was called transformative; getting people to buy into a donor's project was instrumental'.

This is echoed by Breitenbach (1997 p.166)

'In the European context participation as a concept is used frequently with concepts of exclusion and 'integration' As Frans Benders has written 'in the negotiation model and opposition model, the target group does not accept social life of a neighbourhood nor the existing social and economic structures as 'normal/good/ in their interests' as worthy of being integrated into it.'(Benders 1993 p.7)

Nelson and Wright (1995 p.6) suggest a span of the differing expressions of participation. They say that

'Participation has however positioned people very differently in to the development apparatus – as a presence; as objects of a theoretical process of economic and political transformation; as expected 'beneficiaries ' of programmes with pre-set parameters; as contributors of casual labour to help a project achieve its ends; as politically co-opted legitimisers of q policy; or as people trying to determine their own choices and direction independent of the state.'

Wilcox et al (1994 p.2) propose a five rung ladder of participation, relating to the stance any organisation promoting participation may take (the other side of the coin) as follows

'Supporting
Acting together
Deciding together

Substantial
participation

Crucially in practice, they suggest that organisations promoting participation should be clear in their original stance - even if the degree of participation offered is limited. They find (ibid p.1) 'effective participation is most likely when the different interests involved in a project or program are satisfied with the level at which they are involved'. They also find that no level is necessarily better than any other, it is just a question of 'horses for courses'. I found the above very helpful because if my community work is based on increasing involvement in relevant decision-making by creating participatory structures but you, as a user understand participation differently, as participating in project life with a lesser element of 'having a say', I can aim my future work to create a ladder of involvement. I have previously thought the top rung of the ladder to be the aim whereas now the creation of a whole span of participative opportunities (including the top rung) would be the aim. This is probably only understandable to someone who has worked in small scale projects and grappled with the fact that the management committee of users more often than not have difficulties with the management of the project.

Participation and the state

Participation in terms of community development can refer to participation in local partnership and state structures and also to the slow and imperfect transformative process. It could be argued that community work's main task is to enable local people to negotiate with the most significant resource provider within an area - the local authority. Some local authorities (for instance Strathclyde, Sheffield, Manchester) have spent time and resources in decentralisation and seeing what structures can best support representation from those 'who will wear the consequences' (McArdle 1989) of any decisions that are to be made. These structures offer opportunity for dialogue but it has to be harder to encourage local people's ongoing participation in a wider bureaucratic structure than in a smaller organisation where they have (on paper anyway) effective control over mission, programme and management.

structure than in a smaller organisation where they have (on paper anyway) effective control over mission, programme and management. Winstanley (1995 pp.19 - 26) points out that the level of power in these structures is often limited by a focus on operational power (service-led) as opposed to strategic power (policy led).

To me the local authority is a bureaucracy and whilst it makes sense to consult users about priorities for service development and to gain feedback about service delivery, I do not see that such structures give 'constant access to decision-making power'(Craig and Mayo 1995 p.2). Beresford and Croft (1993 p.9) separate the consumerist and democratic approaches to involvement. The consumerist approach 'being service led, beginning with the service providers needs' and the democratic approach, which is more than having a voice in services, is described as 'the idea of empowerment is central to the democratic approach. Its objectives are civil rights and equality of opportunity'. These two approaches are often confused so that what is actually a consultation process is termed participatory. The issues that comes to my mind as barriers to participation are those of the ability of a bureaucracy to respond quickly, scale of operations and representativeness. It is genuinely difficult to respond quickly enough to people's stated concerns, so they can feel the interaction is of value. The complexities of involving different departments and wards can add to this. Large inter- agency working groups require a high level of confidence to attend, follow the business and contribute to.

Alinski (1969 p.191) reporting on a survey of people's participation noted that ' in the most powerful and deeply rooted Peoples organisations.. the degree of participation reached a point varying between 5 and 7%', and also comments (ibid p.182) that, in relation to the most powerful political machine, 'the degree of actual participation ...ran at about one fourth of 1 per cent.'

levels of communication skills as well as information and awareness of local politicking. The fact that you are in a partnership organisation, implies you already represent a community group, so if you have a part-time job and three small children , there are a lot of pressures on your time. An evaluation of participation in a Poverty 3 project (which happened to be a partnership) saw the strengths of such an approach as the 'ability to focus on things of importance to the community, chance for local people to influence the direction' (Breitenbach 1997p.164) and its weaknesses as 'too few people were involved and it was difficult to attract and hold people's interest.'

Participation within a transformative process is just that - a process. The Standing Conference on Community Dvelopment 'Charter' (1994) defines community development, an intervention focussing on the participative process, as being

'about the active involvement of people in the issues that affect their lives. It is based on the sharing of power, skills, knowledge and experience. Its guiding principles are

1. empowering and enabling those who are traditionally deprived of power and control over their common affairs
2. the ability of people to act together to influence social, economic and environmental
3. to encourage sharing and to create structures which give genuine participation and involvement.'

Alinski (1969 p.196) suggests

'a people can only participate if they have the opportunity to formulate their program, which is their reason for participation... and a medium through which they can express and achieve such a program.'

This study sees user controlled voluntary organisations with a slant towards mutual aid as the vehicles that offer the highest levels of

This study sees user controlled voluntary organisations with a slant towards mutual aid as the vehicles that offer the highest levels of opportunity for participation. This is often hard to effect in practice and can be fragile and hard to sustain. Mayo (1994 p.208) suggests that community - based struggles should not substitute for wider strategies for change but that these could be informed by 'drawing upon critical evaluations of actual experiences of community participation and community development'.

Participation in projects

Breitenbach (1997 pp.161 - 162) looks at participation in a European anti-poverty project at a number of levels - at the management committee level, at the user level and at a broader constituency level. As a baseline, ongoing participation in projects is built on what use is made of professionals and a commitment within the group to the wider participation of others. The use of professionals is about equality. Some projects are not built on self-referral and whilst these may use participation as a tool, it will always be within parameters. It can also lead to confusion, as described by Benn (1981 Appendix H) when challenged by the Family Centre Council as to why she had asked a professional to attend a speaking engagement about work at the Family Centre as opposed to a family representative. Participation in community work is about a process which is facilitated by professionals. When it is led by professionals - is it still participation? Professionals often have different agendas, fuelled by a world view different to that of the constituency of the community. We may be committed to social justice but our language, concepts, education and the fact that we are paid make us different. If we have to train people how to manage us, the power relationship between employer and employee will depend on the overlap of agendas. To use an example - I have worked on a project for parents, where two of the workers were pushing forward a gay agenda - this led to the alienation of the network of groups, to whom the project referred

newcomers. Presumably at some point in the future, the result of this would be that the participation of openly gay parents would be easier. Yet in terms of agendas, setting up a group for gay parents was certainly not a priority for the management committee or other users at that time. This was a worker driven agenda fuelled by the equal opportunities policy that most, if not all community projects have in place. It could be that this was just symptomatic of the organisation at the time - that it was not the work that was at issue but the lack of discussion preceding it. Equal opportunities became the backbone of focus for community work in the 1980s and while I am relatively happy to work within this framework of doubly oppressed groups, I wonder whose agenda, equal opportunities derives from, because if the oppressed need to change their attitudes about a number of things in order to be transformed, it continues to worry me that this may be towards the workers agenda not their own.

In order to use professionals as advisors, a project needs to have an active, committed management group, who have been willing and able to undertake a degree of training.

A commitment to wider participation

The opportunity to participate needs to be extended to others. A clique who are in charge is a similar threat to genuine participation as over-involvement by professionals. It is in the project's interests to maintain wider participation to make sure services are well targeted by ongoing feedback from users. The management group also needs a method of renewing itself. We cannot implement an equal opportunities policy if there is no commitment to wider participation, so that newcomers are welcomed and initiated into the project. Burns , Hambleton and Hoggett (1994 p.208) note ' the reactionary proclivities which can exist in some communities'. This brings me back to different agendas - within some areas, there may be good reason for a group not to be inclusive - a management group may actively seek to exclude certain others and workers may have to work to change this. It would appear that if people

have control over their own resources, they may not use them in the manner we want them to. There is also the issue of choice and inclination. Is it enough for the opportunity to participate to exist? Some people may prefer to use a service and not participate in decision-making groups.

Within this context, we have looked at participation in relation to decision-making, but not included participation in project activities and social networks, created by the project - participation as a user. I see the process of increasingly participating in a relevant project as a vehicle for empowerment. The process is a move from the individual to the collective, from user to decision-maker. This probably follows a 'power-to' model of empowerment. This model is described by Nelson and Wright (1995 p.8) as

'out of this interaction, the aim is to find more 'spaces of control' (Giddens 1984) where, although never powerless to start with, by developing confidence and changing attitudes, they can alter power differentials in their relationships'

and by Rowlands (1992) in three levels

'First the personal level involves developing confidence and abilities..second, is the ability to negotiate and influence close relationships. The third involves working collectively to have greater impact than each would have done alone'

The 'power over' model would see power in zero sum terms - you have to wrest power off people who already have it. Described by Nelson and Wright (1995 p.9) as

'the challenge is for the marginalised group to gain treatment as equal partners from people in such institutions.. in a process of development..so that they have long-term access to resources and decision-making'

The third way of thinking about power is as a flow of events (Ferguson 1990 after Foucault) the side effects of which tend to incorporate

Depending on the group's aims, it is probably more at the later stages of a project, that the 'power-over' discourse emerges, when there are resources that could be controlled.. Levels of participation and energy that draw people to participate vary during the life cycle of a project so I am including a project life cycle on the following page with comments in relation to issues that arise and energy levels. (Table 2.1 p.28)

Participation is understood within a structure - participating in. The figure refers to the nature of project activity - life cycles. the empowerment process in relation to project involvement is about involvement in all the stages of project activity. Some (in fact most community groups) won't want to go past the initial stage of setting up the group and partaking in shared activity for instance a parent and toddler group, which could be a service or an informal collective. To get bigger than this first stage, outside input is usually needed in the form of information and training on issues such as fund-raising, constitution, control of resources. Sometimes these skills will already be within the group.

The whole process for me is based on the Freirian concept of 'conscientisation', (as opposed to freeing oneself from a false consciousness). Rahman (1995 p.25) describes this as 'calling for raising the self-reflected awareness of the people.. to assert their 'voice' and for stimulating their self-driven collective action to transform their reality'

Beresford and Croft (1993 p.131) describe this process of empowerment as including 'developing our own accounts, forming our judgements, negotiating with others'.

Table 2.1 Project life-cycle

Community group or pre-project phase

Setting up

1st meeting

Initiative from an individual/s to form a group

Initiative from outside to form group round common need

Ideas discussed. Informal leaders emerge

High

Shared activity - steps to be taken by group

energy

Information re:constituency needed

stage

Group acts to obtain small resource

(can approach professionals at this stage)

Group receives small resource

informal committee - bank account - signatories

Objectives clarified

Clarifying ideas and applying for a larger resource

Group clarifies bigger ideas

Still

Input of professionals re: funding, constitution

high

Main aims decided. Project or pressure group or both

energy

Slightly more formal. Larger resource applied for.

Slight

drop in

attendance

Longish gap.

Increased drop

Group continues. Practical steps towards mission

in attendance

Those who stay

more committed

Setting up the project

Larger resource received

Resurge of

Differences of opinion emerge

energy for

Training input

core group

Premises negotiated. Worker/s appointed

Further information gathering

Targetted, programme. Cycle of work

Users to involve

Ongoing renewal

How does the project renew itself?

What structures are in place to allow a progression

from user to management committee member?

Is the management committee representative of

all its constituency?

Cycles of

Can the management committee manage?

involvement

What use is made of professionals?

What role do outside alliances play?

Small local partnership or larger partnership

Participation at different levels of a project

A participant could be involved at different levels of a project – as a user of a service, as a contributor to and member of the project's everyday life, as a management committee member or as a network or informal partnership member. A user is entitled to a service and to choose whether or not to involve themselves further in decision-making structures (where these are available). There will also be issues that they will identify within this service, that they would wish to input to. So in looking at participation by users, we could look at ensuring :

that the facility to become further involved exists
(section member, management committee member)

that there is a feedback mechanism

that input to decision-making over relevant resource exists , for example for a parent and toddler group, some input to rules, types of activities, trip venues

an inclusive climate is encouraged

I think the facility to move over from user to worker or organiser should exist. In my case study, the possibility of sessional work on the project was a prime motivator, seen as different but higher ranking than being on the management committee. So the progression was seen by users as user- management committee member - officer - worker (inside or outside project). There is also a broader constituency of users - those who fit into our constituency but are not coming. If we ask them why they don't come, we will find out how the project puts itself across to possible participants, bearing in mind that within any grouping there will only be so many who are attracted to project life, even less who participate fully. Reasons for not coming may vary a lot, in this case - too busy, services not relevant, wouldn't come in on my own, just a talking shop in there, group not friendly, didn't know what was on there and so on. All of which provides rich material for improving possibilities for accessing the project.

Participation in project life is slightly different to being a user of a specific service. It might involve being a user of one service, a range of services or just dropping in. Parents in my case study repeatedly said that they came to the project to increase their social networks (and meet their mates, who they met there to start off with). To get anything out of a service, you have to feel comfortable with the environment and people. This really is a team effort. As a group continually reshapes itself, it becomes exclusive (sometimes not without reason) and just by dint of being very familiar with each other, can be offputting to a newcomer. If a newcomer is not welcomed and made to feel at ease, they simply won't come back again. Projects are continually reinventing themselves and looking at the original reasons people came there and how they felt when they came in for the first time can reawaken people's empathy with newcomers.

Participation in management committees

'I think most people felt they were only attending to get a house' (Beresford and Croft 1993 p.67)

'I went to a meeting. People were friendly. I enjoyed it. They wanted me to go to more meetings - three or four in one week. Then they said I could stand for secretary' (ibid p.107)

In my case study, interviews with management committee members suggested - they get further personal development from being a member, feel more worthwhile, feel they are achieving something. 'Hot' issues such as playschemes, camping trips, security arouse the greatest interest and therefore the highest levels of input from a range of members. User control can be as imperfect as consultation, dressed up as participation. but in theory it offers full power to the management committee.

Looking across a number of projects, I have worked on, I find that the issue of the management of the project is addressed in different ways, looking in particular at the input of users to the composition., see Table 2.2 on the following page. Of the possible compositions of management

groups (range of users, clique of users, two tier system, local board, worker led) only a management committee made up of a range of users does not limit the possible participation of users. This raises the following practical issues. Chanan (1992 p.142) suggests 'Groups work best at a level above deprivation. The key movers need to be close enough to the

Table 2.2

Advantages and disadvantages of different compositions of management committees

<u>Composition of management group</u>	<u>Pluses</u>	<u>Minuses</u>
Range of users	Full user control Services successful because developed from users	Tends to concrete agenda and not management agenda
Clique of users	Local people/users learning system Resource in area	Worker has to cover fluctuations Clique may be unrepresentative Project used as power base
Two tier system of workers and users	Each group gets on with what they are interested in and have the skills to do this	Limits power of local people to operational level
Local workers from other projects and council reps., the odd users	Fully take on board legal issues and accountability. Management of sorts to worker/s	Are local people representative of users? Can be off the mark with direction
Worker led	Can be well organised	Different agendas

problems to know them inside out but must not be overwhelmed by them'. Most projects are based in areas of high deprivation. Many users are on low incomes and have a number of other life pressures, which affect them on a day to day basis. Whilst the process can be empowering, some might

really prefer to use a service and could experience efforts to encourage participation as an extra demand. Sometimes the management function of a group, requires them to acquire knowledge at a rate beyond that which is appropriate. To get resources, you need to learn the language of funders, who would rather you were involved in an 'empowerment process' than just 'having a coffee with your mates, where you feel safe'. This can lead to differing agendas. These issues are a real barrier to participation and seem to feed back to the use the group makes of professionals.

Participation in the wider constituency

Participation in this context relates to other networks and groupings with similar concerns and relationships with agencies. Derricourt and Dale (1994 p.79) suggest that 'alliance making occupies a position of central importance for those community workers who are interested in keeping the door to socialism open'. I do not think this is any longer the debate, though alliance making echoes solidarity. I prefer the approach of feminist, black and community work with the disabled, which have contributed to a practice of networks. Criticisms are sometimes made of project work that it is insular and cannot contribute to wider change yet organic networks can form large lobbying interests. Networking and or alliance building with agencies is described by some as the final stage of the empowerment process. Its success can be seen in both the Disability Movement and in organisations like the Single Parent Action Network (Bristol) whose work includes lobbying for single parents within a European forum.

Just because making alliances is effective and allows small fragmented groups to form more powerful lobbying and support groups does not mean it is easy to participate in them. Alliances will pose the same problems as partnership organisations, requiring quite sophisticated levels of communication skills to contribute to. Probably the approach is what

counts here- as per Gilchrist and Taylor's (1997 pp.165 - 179) description of the organisation by a number of groups of an anti-racist festival (clear time focus, clear outcome, limited input, opportunities for fun). They prefer a networking approach, building on informal contacts. I have already discussed what I see as the difficulties for 'users' to work on an equal footing but groups do need to be aware of resources and influence such agencies and their representatives have and to develop relationships with the most significant. Gilchrist and Taylor (ibid p.179) suggest that 'as an organising tool, networking through informal contacts allows relatively easy access to sources of power, expertise and practical support, which might not be readily available through formal approaches'.

Chapter Three

Evaluation Theory

Chapter Three

Evaluation Theory

What is evaluation?

Evaluation differs from pure social research by its linkage to a specific context. Kirkup (1986 p.69) points out that 'the intent of research is to know something in a generalisable way, while the intent of evaluation is to make a choice between options in a given situation'. Patton (1990 p.11) defines evaluation as 'applied research' and differentiates between the purpose of research, which he suggests 'knowledge as an end in itself, to discover truth' and the purpose of applied research which is to 'apply knowledge to solve human and societal problems' (ibid p.12). When we evaluate for knowledge (as opposed to accounting for the organisation's activities or for development of the people and the work), we are finding out if an intervention or programme is working within a specific context.

There is some overlap with research within evaluating for knowledge if we are also seeking to throw light on other similar programmes, but there will be a two pronged approach - firstly to inform the programme and secondly to inform other programmes where this is appropriate.

Whose values? is the central issue to evaluation whether we are evaluating a service, such as Meals on Wheels in a particular area or a process, such as the progressive involvement of members in the management of a community project. Galtung (1967 p.62) suggests that 'to evaluate is to sort out and order stimuli. A value however is the principle according to which this sorting is done'

The organiser of streamlined Meals on Wheels service may feel that the service is much improved, using less staff more efficiently, whilst maintaining the quality of meals. A user might feel that the service is not as good as it was because her lunch arrives at 11 am, before she is ready

to eat it and she now has to contribute toward the cost. The chair of a community project may feel the project is successfully involving users in its management at an appropriate pace; whilst the project worker/s views are that the yearly intake of new members does not allow for the pace of training required to ensure their active involvement in management; users of a service run by the project may just want that service and the local authority's strategic plans for the project's target group may be at odds with those of the independent project on its premises.

Evaluation has to decide which of these competing views of reality takes precedence and to clarify the principles according to which this is done. Social science theory is built upon differing views of the nature of reality and how we perceive it and theories of evaluation slot into a framework that reflects this. Methods, design, focus will all depend on what original stance is taken. Shadish et al (1991 p.19) say 'We can evaluate anything , including evaluation itself' and many disciplines have sought to evaluate their activities. We are here concerned with evaluation as it relates to community projects yet evaluation theory has also been fed from these other disciplines i.e. science, management, education, anthropology, politics. Table 3.1 (p.38) illustrates the main approaches to evaluation that are relevant to this study and sites them within a way of knowing the social world and indicates which other disciplines have informed them. It was compiled after reading three histories of evaluation at the beginning of the books written by Marsden et al (1994), Everitt and Hardiker (1996), Pawson and Tilley (1997). These provided different conceptual frameworks, which I have then adapted .

Broadly speaking , the following quotes from Marsden et al (1994 p.13) cover the different approaches

' Evaluation process, when approached from what might be termed a traditional perspective, is understood as a retrospective review of what has happened... the elaboration of suitable indicators of achievement by outsiders'

and

‘ there has been a gradual evolution from what Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to as first generation evaluation, or evaluation as measurement ..., through second generation evaluation with the development of ‘program evaluation’ to third generation evaluation with evaluation as judgement .. the evolution has been in the direction of incorporating beneficiaries more centrally in the evaluation process.’ (ibid pp.15 – 16)

I will now discuss each of the approaches to evaluation which are identified in Table 3.1. As an overview, experimental evaluation is not really suited to community work settings because it requires control over variables involved which would be difficult. However notions of time and comparison associated with experiment may be. American management evaluation is prevalent in large partnerships and in some funding monitoring forms. It is almost totally focussed on outputs, which when specified in advance place controls over spontaneous development, or development based on interaction. Both these forms of evaluation lie within a positivist framework and they are top down approaches - the values of the funder / local authority / researcher will be paramount as will their perceptions of how a positive result can be evidenced. If the purpose of evaluation can be for knowledge, for accountability, for development, American management evaluation is mainly about accountability. Whilst experimental evaluation is concerned with causal effects- intervention x led to outcome y, American management evaluation is mostly about value for money and efficiency. As it is often used for multi-programme funders, the notion of comparison is implicit. Both will be carried out by outsiders with a clear start and finish point.

The other evaluation theories mentioned fall within an interpretive perspective. We know reality by our interactions with others. Something is good because it is perceived as such not because of any inherent goodness which might be spotted. Different perceptions of ‘good’(and ‘bad’ for that matter) lead to a pluralist reality. Pluralist evaluation accepts

Table 3.1

Evaluation approaches

How we know the world	Focus of evaluation	Role of evaluator	Strengths	Weaknesses	Status of beneficiaries
Theory of evaluation					
Positivist					
Experimental	Causal links between specific programme and results at end of programme (informed by science)	Researcher expert	Medical	Variables hard to pin down Outsider	Objects
American Management	Efficiency / effectiveness equation (informed by management and systems theory)	Giver of information to funder	Quick picture of take up	Can't capture bits outside original aims Meaningless without contextualising and illuminating certain bits	Objects
Interpretative					
Pluralist	Exploring of actors' points of view (informed by theories of society and education)	Facilitator	Validity of subjective data	No view paramount	Subjects Subjects/ Stakeholders
Participatory	Process of participatory evaluation (informed by anthropology and feminist research)	Facilitator Educator	Beneficiary 'driven	Hard to implement	Co-evaluators
Critical					
Critical	Discourse between stakeholders (informed by theories of power in society)	Facilitator Negotiator Intervenor	Could aid discussion of power issues	Power issues brought to fore may not be resolvable	Subject/ Stakeholder

that there are different views of reality, depending on your original position. Some pluralist evaluations would just accept that there are different views stemming from different agendas, identify the main players and elicit all their different views. (Smith and Cantley 1985). Others (Weiss 1986 for example) developed stakeholder evaluation, where all those with an interest in the subject of the evaluation may have an input to the discussions, mainly in developing criteria for evaluation. There can be some overlap here with American management evaluation, probably in direct ratio to the degree of overlap of agendas in large partnerships between more powerful structured partners and the community. For example, an evaluation could mostly be pre-structured with a degree of input from the community to the co-production of criteria for evaluation.

These evaluations are still likely to be carried out by outsiders but they would have a more qualitative feel to them. They would be evaluations - a bit for knowledge, a bit for accountability and a bit for development (in that the stakeholders at least would be aware of each others interests and perhaps communicate). Participatory evaluation is about evaluating for development - both to feed back into the project and to use its process as a learning tool for those involved. Here the emphasis is very much on the agenda and 'voice' of the subjects.

Critical evaluation is mainly about creating dialogue between the different stakeholders also for development but with the aim that the stakeholders will better understand each other at the end of it. Pluralist, participatory and critical evaluations recognise the issue of different agendas but how they address the relationship varies.

The positivist viewpoint on which scientific research has traditionally been based does not distinguish between the study of human and non-

human objects, and places emphasis on that which can be observed, experimental design and causal explanation.

The next section looks at the different theories of evaluation in a little more detail, starting with experimental evaluation.

Experimental evaluation within a positivist framework focusses on measurable improvements for beneficiaries of a treatment/programmes as opposed to those of a similar group of non-beneficiaries (traditional experimental design). The focus of an experiment is to prove a causal link, originally between two substances that interacted with each other, and then to observe the effects of treatments/interventions. Working within a project, within a community, we cannot say that as our women returners course was so good, three of the eight women who attended gained part-time employment a couple of weeks after, because there are too many variables. Perhaps eight out of eight other similar local women, who did not attend the course gained such employment in the same week, perhaps a new employer opened up seeking part time women workers, perhaps they had already been offered the jobs before they started and so on. The only fully experimental evaluation I know of within the social welfare field was carried out by Age Concern in 1970 to look at the benefits of providing a range of care options in the home for elderly people being discharged from hospital. They also looked at how a similar group of elderly people got on who did not have these services.

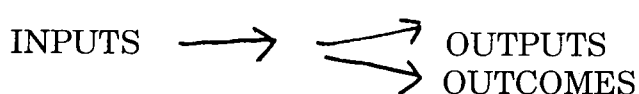
Experimental evaluation will be carried out by an outsider and falls within a treatment model which tends to disempower the person receiving the treatment. Where it was not possible to find a control group to which recipients had been randomly assigned, time series experiments might be carried out to provide a baseline for post-treatment measurement. It is really these notions of change over time and comparison that we take from the experimental model. Change over time harks back to the

experimental , even if our data is based on people's own perceptions of self change over time. Within a whole project context, also one way of minimising eccentricities of context is to compare the project's ability to function at two or more different points in time within the same context. Some accredited educational programmes may have very narrow aims and be split into segmental teaching blocks which may be suited for an adapted style of experimental evaluation.

American management evaluation

'what all the uses of the word (evaluation) have in common is the notion of judging merit. Someone's examining and weighing a phenomenon.. against some explicit idea or yardstick.'
(Weiss1972 p.1)

American management evaluation is designed to provide evidence of the success of a project in terms of its stated objectives. The slightly cruder original goal model widens to that based on systems theory to provide the basis for the evaluation. Both these evaluation theories equate evaluation with measure. Handy (1976 p.337) says of systems that 'they are defined by their purpose and are concerned with the flows or processes through the structure'. The following figure is commonly used to illustrate the system



Inputs to the system can be seen as staff, money, equipment, expertise. Results are expressed as outputs and outcomes. Outputs are a quantitative measure - how many people from the target group came to the course. Outcomes are more qualitative - what did they feel they had gained. Aims and objectives will be well clarified in advance, with key milestone targets. This means that criteria for evaluation also have to be set in advance, usually by outsiders. This sort of evaluation has been widely used in the UK to evaluate initiatives such as City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget funded partnerships. It relies very

heavily on monitoring (system of data collection, relating to original goals) at intervals. The following list is an extract from SRB Core Outputs (Bidding Guidance: SRB Challenge Fund 1997 p.35):

- 8Ai) Number of voluntary organisations supported
- 8Aii) Number of community groups supported
- 8C Number of individuals employed in voluntary work
- 8D Number of local employers with employee volunteering schemes
- 8E Number of community enterprise start ups

This evaluation model is prevalent throughout the main funding bodies and government departments and is now almost a base line to which other information could be added. The breaking down of a key objective into smaller milestones also limits the amount of interactive development that is possible. The constraints filter through strategic objectives, operational objectives and target groups. Partnership organisations always involve the community at the early stages (because they need the community as a key partner to get the funding) but the timescales are often rushed, limiting the time for the community to have input into the pre determined criteria and milestones. The agenda needs really to be co-produced to be successful and this is mainly a professional agenda. Whilst American management evaluation can provide a quick overall picture, the results are fairly meaningless without contextualisation and the illumination of certain parts qualitatively. It is used in other contexts than regeneration but the outputs often miss large parts of community work, an area where it has been difficult to break the main strands of work into a quantifiable format. It rarely concerns itself with for example 'increased opportunities for social networking', or 'feeling more supported', but rather with how many training courses you have completed or how many part time jobs have been created.

Carter (1988) in his study of performance indicators asks whether outputs are more to do with monitoring than evaluation as the focus is on

data collection in relation to an original goal. This model of evaluation really does little more than record the facts, such as 64 children between 5 and 11 attended the playscheme. We know nothing of the quality of the scheme, nor of other influencing factors. Vocabulary associated with American management evaluation are 'indicators, performance indicators, quality systems'. Indicators are explored more in Part Four of Chapter Five on methods. Quality systems are steps taken to ensure the repeated quality of a product, such as training and induction of new staff. This would mean that numerical data could be enhanced by knowing the quality of the service was also covered.

As a result of research on the evaluation of existing partnerships, this model of evaluation has both looked at the co-production of criteria for evaluation (stakeholders), and also recognised that milestone evaluation is rather a series of one off affairs. There is a move now towards a slightly more integrated framework such as 'social auditing' (Pearce et al 1996) but this is still carried out by an outsider.

Meyer and Singh (1997 p.61) sum up this model of evaluation, when they say

'Emphasis is placed on measureability: and reviewing timeliness, efficiency and value for money is standard. Analysis is generally objective and scientific, reducing reality to its smallest possible components'.

Interpretive evaluation

The wide range of social settings, a feeling that evaluation was inspectorial, and the lack of responsiveness of evaluation models stemming from a positivist standpoint, led to a range of models from a different standpoint that could encompass or deal with these issues. The main move was to an interpretive framework, where reality is seen

as a product of 'how people interpret their world' (Bryman 1988 p.55) and focuses on 'the meanings and interpretations of actors'(ibid) within a given situation . Bryman (ibid p.61) states that

'The most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied.'

These will be placed in context and the focus is on process. Evaluation will be illuminative not necessarily definitive. Parlett (1985 p.xv) uses the term illuminative for an evaluation where the aim is to build up 'an overall depiction of the program that does justice to the inherent complexity and throws light on little known and previously taken for granted features of the program that are crucial to its life and character.' Another salient feature of illuminative evaluation is the move to focus on using the evaluation to improve whatever is being evaluated as opposed to the concept of marking it. (This evaluation model developed within an educational context). In America where evaluation theory has been more developed, interpretive evaluation was termed 'responsive' (Stake 1980) and 'goal-free' (Scriven 1973).

The next move was towards pluralist evaluation (see Smith and Cantley 1985 for an example). Here there are different views of how to evaluate from a plurality of value stances. A purely 'pluralist' evaluation will look at the different aims and objectives, perceptions of achievements of a number of parties to the intervention but will not seek to negotiate these differences in agenda.

Stakeholder evaluations are a common way of dealing with the different value stances of different parties. Quite what happens between the stakeholders may develop into a different model of evaluation but a basic stakeholder evaluation implies the seeking of the views of all those whose views have led to a particular construction of reality and brings into play

the notion of the process of the evaluation as having value. The role of the evaluator is now more that of facilitator, assisting stakeholders to give their views. The word 'stakeholder' tends to imply a combination of all those who have an interest in a successful outcome - beneficiaries, professionals, representatives of funding body. Sometimes users are referred to as 'primary stakeholders'. Everitt (1995 p.6) says

‘ Some define stakeholders as those who have a responsibility to make decisions about the future of the project being evaluated. Others define stakeholders more broadly as all the people whose lives are affected by the program and it's evaluation’.
(Weiss 1986 p.151)

A common form of evaluation for large partnerships is in theory stakeholder based but in practice as House (1993 p.10) comments 'stakeholders do not have equal power to influence and utilise the evaluation'. Evaluation theory deals with the issue of how to deal with this in different ways. Naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985), the pre-cursor of critical evaluation argues that 'one of the major contributions an evaluator makes in any given situation is this clarification of value differences, a clarification that should lead ultimately to greater understanding by each audience of all others' (Guba and Lincoln 1981). p.325). Participatory evaluation as with participatory action research (Chambers 1983) seeks to reinforce the skills and knowledge base of beneficiaries, by not only carrying out the evaluation from the value stance of beneficiaries but also using its process as a developmental strand. Critical evaluation takes naturalistic inquiry one step further by focussing on the expressed interplay of agendas and any resultant meshing or otherwise of agendas.

Participatory evaluation

‘Evaluation is seen as a process of learning, rather than a test of success or failure in the realised outcomes.’ (Conway 1990)

As with other uses of the word, participatory evaluation has a wide span of meaning, from being consulted as a stakeholder to being a co-evaluator. Genuine participatory evaluation is hard to implement with its focus on participation as an end not as a means and is more used in Third World contexts than in UK settings. It also sits uneasily with the increasing professionalisation of evaluation. Here the evaluator is not only facilitator but also social educator. I use the word participatory here to refer to working with users/members as co-evaluators. Project self evaluation sites evaluation with 'insiders' but offers a span of those who will be leading the evaluation. Participatory evaluation is explored in more depth in Chapter Five. Whilst some might view this as a method, I think it is much more than that. Shakespeare et al (1993 p.7) comment 'the focus on participatory research is related to the feminist debate about the relationship of the researcher and her research subjects' which is one aspect but it also relates to the relative value of different knowledge bases and ways of perceiving the world. It seems to highlight the conundrum at the core of social welfare - if I can only judge the effect of my work by what is happening to you, how can your views not be paramount? If my perspective includes elements of social science research theory and yours does not, perhaps I should try the world from your eyes, not vice versa. Reason (1994) offers some assistance with these questions. (see p.48 choice of evaluation models).

Critical evaluation

'not only to ensure that different views of participants are expressed but also that they are heard by each other'
Everitt and Kane (1995 p.7)

A critical perspective takes into account power issues within society. If the stakeholders influence is not equal then a critical evaluator can facilitate and even intervene in the discourse between stakeholders. The focus of the evaluation will be the discourse between parties. A critical model of evaluation stems from critical theory, a way of viewing the

world that seeks to unravel the interplay of agendas between the powerful and oppressed in a way that throws light on the structures and devices used by the powerful to retain their power. This sounds wonderful, and examples of critical evaluation definitely work with the oppressed in a participatory way (Everitt 1996) prior to discourse with stakeholders. However, I have reservations about a model, that calls itself emancipatory but the mere concept of which would be difficult to grasp for someone without formal education. How could a local person name 'discourse analysis?' Therefore whilst in theory beneficiaries are still treated as subjects, in practice this must slightly limit their role, in comparison with participatory evaluation, from co-evaluator to stakeholder. I find Reason's (1994 p.31) outline of a critical world view the most sympathetic. He says 'opposites co-define each other,.. yet also co-exist as two sides of the same coin' and also

'every thesis calls forth in some way its antithesis and the play between these is a flowing, changing, interactive pattern that arises, moment to moment, as a dynamic process that grows out of the tension of contradiction'.

There are theories of evaluation which are not included in Table 3.1 because they are either sub-sections of a wider theory or do not correlate with my experience and perspective. the main one of these is realistic evaluation, which falls within a positivist framework because of its basically scientific approach, which seeks to develop causal links, but also offers the notion of a stratified reality. The focus of the evaluation is first of all the generative mechanism that repeatedly causes an outcome within a context. It is interesting to note that Pawson and Tilley (1997), coming from a more scientific background lump all the interpretive models of evaluation together under the heading constructivist.

Choice of evaluation models

House (1993 p.128) says of evaluation

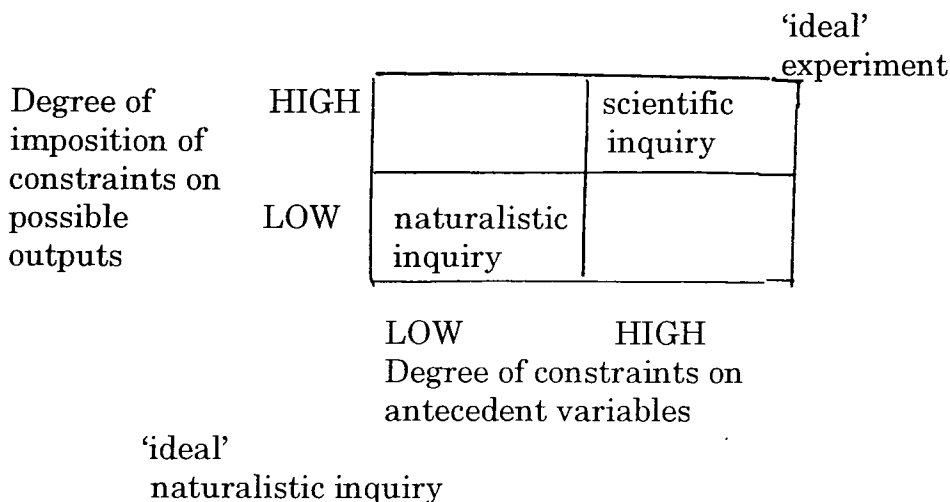
‘ Social justice in evaluation concerns the manner in which interests are served’ and (ibid p.138) ‘the injustice problem is compounded when the recipient group is disadvantaged within the larger society itself.’

Community work is about social justice in one form or another. As we have already seen, different approaches to community work are based on different interpretations of social justice and one’s commitment to these. This would also influence the theory driven model one is drawn to. For instance, my experience and commitment is to community projects, that seek to involve users in their management because I regard this facility as allowing at least a movement to full user control. Someone else’s experience and commitment might be to the interface between local groups and authority, regarding enabling people to negotiate with authority as the prime arena for the bringing about of social justice. I am naturally drawn to participatory evaluation with users as co-researchers, whilst recognising the difficulties of implementation, because this fits in with my value system. Someone else will be naturally drawn to the critical model. Guba and Lincoln (1989 p.299) point out that ‘evaluation is always disruptive of the prevailing political balance’ and that

‘ the evaluator ought to be able to satisfy himself , at the beginning of each evaluation, that the information likely to result from the evaluation will be worth it in terms of political imbalance and human dysfunctionality it will certainly induce’ (ibid p.302)

Their figure below, drawn from Willems and Raush (1969 p.47) suggests that the two extremes of ‘ideal ‘ naturalistic inquiry and ‘ideal’ experimental inquiry would be difficult to mesh.

Figure 3
Domain of inquiry



Here naturalistic inquiry relates to a number of overlapping evaluation models mentioned - participatory, critical, naturalistic, with pluralist being nearer to the centre of the above figure (on the naturalistic side). I think the above figure helps illustrate the progression of evaluation theory as discussed from high constraints on possible outputs to low constraints. It also explains why there would be difficulties in terms of methods for an evaluation whose design emerges as the investigation proceeds; moreover it is in constant flux as new information is gained and new insights are achieved (Lincoln and Guba 1985 pp.208 - 211). This would be at odds with an evaluation that sought to put constraints on possible outputs and antecedent variables.

I was originally confused by the emancipatory language of critical theory but I now find that this is not necessarily the case. Not all synthesis can be emancipatory, it is merely different to the two original constituents. I do not see it as an ongoing synthesis. Translated into the life of community projects - this would mean then that agendas may reach a temporal synthesis but as the original tensions still exist, they may separate at any point and remerge and so on. Reason (1994 p10) would argue that a participatory world view is an original stance, which we have

partly lost but can recapture via the critical interplay between this original stance and ‘alienated unconscious participation’, and the dance between them.

Reason also offers me the best solution to the problem I have discovered which is that ‘what local people get out of projects’ and ‘how to evaluate community projects’ are questions relating to two different agendas. Taking one strand of thought to its conclusion, evaluation is part of a dominant agenda, so really it is irrelevant if its participatory or any other form as it is just a question of the dominant culture informing itself about its own concerns. He suggests that a major pitfall for ‘autonomous differentiated consciousness’ (ibid p.28) is ‘mistaking the map for the territory’ and I think that is the difference. Evaluation is about tinkering with the map, whereas the territory is ‘what local people get out of community projects’. It may be that a map, informed by those who know the territory, is more useful in practice.

Patton (1990 p.39) advocates ‘methodological appropriateness over methodological orthodoxy’ and considering the vast range of settings and styles of organisations, existing within the voluntary and community sector, certain models will be more appropriate in some settings than in others, for example to nationwide policy implementation as opposed to a local pilot project. There are also arenas that have in their structure narrow segmental building blocks such as education towards accreditation or behavioural programmes, where the beneficiary is clearly using a service. Within the one project also, there might be a mingling of purposes for evaluation - to have some figures relating to outputs to send to funders, to use the evaluation partly for the purposes of development, if only to clarify the project’s mission, which is a legitimate function of the management committee, and to find out if a specific service is reaching its target group, or is worth the input that might be better focussed on another area of the project. We do not have to evaluate the whole of the

project in the same way to provide ourselves with this information and we should also bear in mind that the existing reality of the project will limit the model of evaluation we can use effectively. For instance, a participatory evaluation would be unlikely to work in a project that does not have participation as an end already threaded through its process.

Some projects have already delineated their consecutive goals so narrowly either after discussion with all parties or resulting from a professional agenda, that there is little to do but to collect the information relating to these goals, because previous decisions have already been made as to whether these goals are worth pursuing in themselves. It is more likely that review will refine these goals than change them radically. If one were an outside evaluator, one would also need to keep an eye open as to what political purpose within the organisation the evaluation was meant to serve.

As a guideline language is indicative of which model of evaluation is being used: treatment is part of the vocabulary of experimental evaluation; goals/outputs/ indicators are the vocabulary of American management evaluation, participation and the knowledge systems of the people are that of participatory evaluation and dialogue and discourse between stakeholders that of critical evaluation.

Having looked at the different models of evaluation, I would now like to look at the evolution of the evaluation of community work within the framework of these models.

Chapter Four

Evaluation and community projects

Chapter Four

Evaluation and community projects

As I have been considering the different agendas that arise during an evaluation, I have put together the history of community work in a tabulated form (information from Popple (1995) and Mayo (1994)). I am just about to look at evaluations of community projects so Table 4.1 (overleaf) just places the projects and the work within the wider context. Community projects could be termed as one arena where community work might take place. The others being working across projects, the interface between community projects and statutory agencies, networking, alliance-building and other forms of non-project work. Community projects fit within the pluralist / radical columns of Table 4.1. This covers, moving across the headings from left to right, background events in society, examples on the ground, main source of funding, theoretical stance of the work, moving from paternalist to pluralist, across to radical/ socialist and spontaneous community action. It is not intended to be comprehensive but to serve as an outline against which to consider agendas in project work. Placing within this framework reflects my own views. Spontaneous community action now seems only to be found in the environmental field and possibly in the proliferation of self-help groups (though these are not necessarily outward looking and can have many different slants). It is hard to say what the self-driven agenda of the people is within this context - we are not talking about one people, but a diversity of peoples; was the solidarity felt in earlier years a conspiracy of hope, projected from the changing agenda of the dominant culture? . It is probably truer to say that the people have many agendas. Nowadays, possibly, only disability groups within the social welfare field, have a networked and confrontational

Table 4.1 Whose agenda?
History of Community Work in the United Kingdom

Date	Background events	Examples on the ground	Main funding	Theoretical leaning		Spontaneous action
				Paternalist	Radical	
1890 1900	/Colonies - keeping them sweet Poverty of working class	Social and educational reforms - charities and settlements	State Private church university State	Benevolent paternalism Benevolent paternalism	Radical	Radicalisation of labour movement Glasgow rent strikes
1920s	Response to growth of labour movement General strike 1926	New estates-- community committees - community centres for the unemployed Growth of diverse voluntary bodies (CAB/WRVS) Homes for heroes	State		Suffragette movement	National unemployed workers movement - General Strike
Post War 1960s	Creation of Welfare State Economy slightly worse	Younghusband report (1959) Ingleby report (1960) Plowden report (1967) Skeffington report (1969)	State	Move towards pluralism		Squatting because no adequate housing provision
late 60s	Student action Unrest in Paris Anti-Vietnam demonstrations 'Rivers of blood' speech (Powell)		Gulbenkian Foundation funding for innovative and experimental Statutory and voluntary			
70s 80s	Equal Pay Act Sex Discrimination Act Equal Opps Commission Luner Area studies Conservative govt. Rise of equal opps.	Community Development Projects Shelter CPAG Housing Action areas Falling off of community action but rise of womens, disabled and black groups	Cuts to LA s Mostly state Increasingly mixed	Urban programme money to range of smaller - social welfare areas self help	Community Development Projects Single action groups groups	Miners strike Riots Poll tax
90s	Market economy	Neighbourhood work/ self help Rise of partnerships	Mixed and hard to get Lottery, Health Auth., ESF, SRB	Stimulation of self help Care in the Community	work with black and disabled neighbourhood work groups	Environment related

stance. Thinking of the wide arena within which all this activity takes place, through services, partnerships small and large, community projects and groups, it is still probably possible to find a span of leanings, although the prevalence of a radical stance has been diluted.

The consumerist cycle has meant that almost everyone is now a beneficiary and a funder, involved in a small or large way - donating to street and door to door collections, buying lottery tickets, helping with traditional fund-raising activities such as jumble sales and sponsored events, including also the benefits of volunteering, not only for the recipient but also the volunteer. As voluntary organisations are being requested to take on more service provision within a mixed social welfare economy, one wonders if smaller organisations will be able to maintain the balance of user management, which obviously works on a very small scale but becomes increasingly complex as the organisation grows in size and scope.

Issues relating to the appropriate evaluation of community projects

Community work has been an area laden with the values of workers, wishing to bring about social justice within society. It follows that when a community worker looks at what a project and their work within it is achieving or has achieved, they may be focussing more on whether or not it has helped to bring about social justice in some small way rather than on what people say they get out of it. In the UK, literature in relation to community work has tended to divide into the radical/socialist camp and the pluralist camp, the latter focussing more on technique and how to carry out its practice. In terms of evaluation, this has translated as examining the reality to see how it fits in within pre-set goals (definitions of social justice) as the hypothesis (for radical/socialist community work) or alternatively examining the reality to identify pattern and range (pluralist). The two polarisations of the work (radical/socialist and pluralist) led me to examine if there is tension or overlap between a

critical and a participatory world view. Community work at the project level has been criticised because without alliances or networks, it does nothing to affect the macro level. Correspondingly radical community work can be criticised because it constructs a macro level beyond people's consciousness. It can be based on the community worker's agenda, where this is to network and change aspects of society. Participation of course could also be part of that same agenda.

Dual purpose evaluation

As funding has become more and more targeted, groups seeking grants have had to become more reflective in relation to proving their worth to outsiders. Chambers (1993 p.11) says that 'Meaningful evaluation and institutional learning are obstructed by a conspiracy of success. Success is rewarded while failure however potentially instructive is not.' This would seem to suggest that in practice, we will need more than one measure of how we are doing - one to inform us based on feedback and another to prove to others our relative success.

I think it would be useful at this point to introduce Table 4.2 overleaf, which illustrates that there are different benefits for different groups depending on which type of evaluation is used. What we have been considering are the theoretical standpoints that lead to using different models of evaluation within the field of community projects. Table 4.2 actually relates to the outputs of evaluation itself, all reflecting an American management model. Within this framework, critical evaluation falls within using a consultant or advisor (learning skills here varies depending on the consultant's stance) and participatory evaluation falls within self-evaluation. The table is included here to show that different types of evaluation have different focusses and different spin offs for the organisations and funders and it is clear. Whilst these types of evaluation (Connor 1994) all relate to performance review, which is really a description of the American management model ('systematised attempts to

relate 'inputs' to 'outputs' (Connor 1993 p.1), the choice is really between development and accountability. This is relevant when we look at whether it is possible to combine types of evaluation. It is quite common for organisations to have two sorts of evaluations as it is recognised that there are learning benefits in self-evaluation, but funders mostly require American management evaluations. McKeown points out the relationships that these produce in diagrammatic form (1991 pp.20- 22). As we are not here concerned as a funder, project self -evaluation appears to offer the best possibilities (the F type).

Table 4.2 Summary of the main purpose of various types of performance review, their use, advantages and the limitations.

	Type						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<u>Focus</u>							
specific aspects	✓	-	*	*	*	*	*
overview	-	✓	*	*	*	*	*
finances	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	*
outputs/scale	-	✓	✓	-	*	*	✓
management structures	-	✓	✓	.	*	*	✓
<u>Enables voluntary organisation to</u>							
identify weaknesses	-	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*
identify strengths	-	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*
identify solutions	-	✓	✓	-	*	✓	-
help implement solutions	-	*	*	-	-	✓	-
learn skills	-	*	-	-	-	✓	-
<u>Enables funder to</u>							
adjust grant	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
assess project		✓	✓	✓	*	-	-
assess programme	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓

A: Routine monitoring through annual reports

B: Keeping in touch

C: Consultant's or Adviser's assessment

D: Evaluation for funder

E: Jointly commissioned evaluation

F: Self:evaluation by voluntary organisation

G: Funder's evaluation programme

(Taken from Connor 1994 p.176).

✓ Usually a feature

* Varies

- Rarely a feature

Literature review

This covers literature in relation to evaluation both of community work interventions and of community projects. When I started this study, I was not aware of much literature in relation to evaluation theory and community projects because I have only come across two books that link evaluation and community in the title - Key et al (1976) and Connell (1995). However on further examination, there is a wide literature of mostly case studies both in community work and overlapping disciplines. Much of this literature is fragmented due to the wide diversity of programmes and funders. Evaluation is a discipline that has established itself over the last ten years or so, and what might previously have been termed action-research is sometimes now termed evaluation. There is also the fact that community work itself is a relatively new discipline, which occasionally changes its focus of how exactly social justice can be achieved so that some of the studies, for example, Lees and Smith (1975) were evaluating for knowledge (how does this approach of community work in general succeed) as opposed to evaluation for development (in this instance, what can we learn about the approach that will improve its functioning). There were also a number of practitioner studies of community work settings, published by the Association of Community Workers and the Community Projects Foundation (c.1980).

The Community Development Projects were originally set up in twelve inner city areas in the late 1960s/70s by the Home Office and incorporated a research worker within each project. This was done 'in a concentrated search to the problems of deprivation'. The aims of the projects were based as Popple (1995 p.18) says on a 'pathological model of poverty that argued that people in disadvantaged communities failed to compete in the market place because of internal community or personal problems rather than structural inequalities'. The researchers were employed in the scientific tradition to apply an 'expert' viewpoint to identify and quantify the impact of the work of the projects and to feed this information both

back to the project and to the inter-project team who could collate and compare this information, before producing recommendations. The action-research approach was used in order to facilitate the incorporation of successful results into the work of the projects as they became available. Action-research is basically a method, often used by practitioners. The aim of practitioner research should be to refine the practice as well as meeting other aims. Everitt (1992) within a social work field refers to the 'research - minded practitioner', that practitioner-research is not just a one off piece of work, but a way of continually critically reflecting on practice. Hart and Bond (1995 pp.40 - 44) tabulate the characteristics of carrying out action-research within different models. They refer to 'the combination of inquiry, intervention and evaluation, which powers the action-research cycle' (ibid p.3). Smith (1975 p.192) comments in relation to the evaluation of the Community Development Projects, 'the risk is of selecting outcomes that reflect the interests of particular groups, especially those who have commissioned the research' and 'this restricted focus encourages the belief that the purpose of the evaluation is to identify the next step...rather than set out the costs and benefits for different groups involved in any change' (ibid p.192). The final report of the inter-project team was a structural analysis of the reasons for deprivation, a value stance so strong as to minimise the actual activities of the projects.

The case studies published by the Association of Community Workers and the Community Projects Foundation, fall within the realm of practitioner research, sharing practice and discussion of issues, moving from an assessment of what had happened in a project at its end to grouping projects thematically and thinking about evaluation as a process.

Two very different comparative case studies stand out - Lees and Mayo's (1984) evaluation of European funded resource centres and Butcher et al's (1980) study of community groups. The former study raises all the questions relating to how one deals with different agendas in evaluation.

It is in two parts, the first written by Lees, placing community work and work in the resource centres within a critical framework and the second part by Mayo on the work of the resource centres as they fit within that framework. Whilst most evaluation has an element of the goal model about it (in whether criteria have been set for evaluation, no matter who sets them) the focus here was definitely on the elements of community action within the resource centres as the prime goal. Butcher et al's study is different because their value stance is not as explicit and their focus is clearly a detailed examination of what was happening on the ground in a number of established and multi-stranded groups. They use the Gulbenkian Foundation's (1973 p.71-77) framework for analysis and after examining existing theory opt for a grounded theory approach. Within this they are informed partly by systems theory.

The Gulbenkian Foundation, (one of whose criteria for grants is still innovation in the field of social welfare), looked in the late 1960s/70s at community work as an innovative new field of work. They funded the setting up of a Community Work Group for three years to explore community work, community action and the training of community workers. The final report (1973) recommended the setting up of the resource centres. The group recognised the different agendas of those involved in community work and their framework of analysis is offered as a useful and comprehensive tool to gather information by which a project could then be judged. Although they recognise the different agendas, the framework discriminates in favour of the agenda of workers and agencies.

They also suggest that where possible a project should be monitored from its beginning. The framework covers background of project to put it in context, statement of who is carrying out the analysis, reasons for the initiative, different perceptions of situation which needs remedying, aims, how progress will be measured, situation analysis, organisational structure, relationships with other agencies and policies, intended action,

resources necessary, mapping of all resources available, character of work and significant events, developmental changes at all levels, process analysis. Evaluation should be looked at in terms of the effects of the work on the problem, achievement of objectives, incidental achievements, were resources adequate and recommendations for the future. They were really examining whether community work as a whole was effective.

Key et al (1976 p.10) divide approaches to evaluation into two broad headings: 'hard-line' which includes the goal model (American management) and 'soft line'. They criticise the goal model because community work has broad aims and therefore imprecise objectives, and these imprecise goals will change as they are implemented, leading to unanticipated outcomes. They come up with a model, they term as 'critical appraisal' (ibid pp.46 - 52) which recognises and encourages the involvement of constituents. This is based on the ideas that the community itself has a right to judge the community work programme that has been set up in their midst; constituent involvement is more likely to influence future practice; when constituents are not involved... subtle perversions of facts may occur in favour of policy makers. Their book is an exploration of how to evaluate the process of community work as well as its outcomes and to develop theory to support this.

Over the 1980s, the American management model of evaluation came into vogue with all sorts of performance and output measures. Constraints were put on the nature of the work, both in terms of targeted groups and breaking down a broad aim into a series of target sub-aims. The focus turned to how best to describe a broad aim programme, such as community development in more tangible terms, (Flecknoe and Maclellan (1989), Bell (1992), Strathclyde Council (1984). These are explored in more detail in the section of the next Chapter, titled measurement of intangibles. Over the same period, feminist methodology looked to the authenticity of subjects' experience (Oakley 1981), lessening the distance

between the researcher and the researched where the paramount reality is that expressed by the subject.

Within this same model, the voluntary sector was also busy evaluating itself, resulting in Feek's (1988) very clear 'how to do it' guide and Connor's (1993) and Ball's (1988) separate views on how to evaluate in the voluntary sector, their conclusions stemming from a number of case study evaluations. Whilst they touch on other models (experimental, participatory), they really stay within the American management model with varying degree of stakeholder involvement. Connor's (1994) table relating to the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to evaluation are useful (as reproduced on page 57).

With the growth of the European Union and its focus on alleviating poverty within the Union, there have been three European anti-poverty programmes, funding projects in each member state, which has led to a growth in trans-national research. The evaluation of these has moved from an American management model to project self-evaluation (combining practitioner research with a midway approach between stakeholder and participatory evaluation, depending on the structure of the project). The developmental role of evaluation has increased (Breitenbach 1997). These are, however, large research projects, having a central research base which could further work on extracting policy information from project self-evaluation and from inter-project recommendations (Room 1986). The idea of the involvement of users grew over the 1980s from both ends of the political spectrum, fuelled at the one end by changes in perception such as the move from the medical to the social model of disability, and also the growth in minority rights groups and at the other end of the spectrum by the government's growing interest in consumer rights in relation to service delivery. This broadened the goal model to include different stakeholders (Weiss 1983) within a project as reflective of a pluralist vision of society.

The developmental role of evaluation has been influenced by both anthropological and feminist theory from ethnography and action research to participatory action research. These theories give more weight to the knowledge and knowledge systems of the subject. If there is a difference between community work and participatory action research it is that community work operates within certain constraints and the agenda is slightly more professional than in participatory action research. The participatory approach to evaluation appears to be mostly used in development work overseas for instance, Fals-Borda (1991), Smith et al (1997), Marsden et al (1994) and the very clear how to do it guide of Feuerstein (1986). These differ slightly in how much authenticity is given to people's existing knowledge systems.

The last move has been towards critical evaluation, in relation to the evaluation as well as its subject matter. Here the views of stakeholders not only need to be heard by each other but also any differences acted upon during the discourse. The aim is to evaluate for change. Marsden et al (1994 p.30) describe this model of evaluation as

‘ What emerges from this process are not conclusions or recommendations based on ‘objective ‘value judgements but an agenda for negotiation, based on the claims, concerns, and issues that were not resolved during the dialogue that is the evaluation process... The dialogue that this process initiates is sustained as the stakeholders seek to create more informed and sophisticated constructions’.

The nature of community work fits easily within this framework and I will return to discussing its relative merits in relation to participatory evaluation after a look at other available material on evaluation.

Pawson and Tilley's (1997) model of realistic evaluation as mentioned in the previous section on evaluation models is interesting in its focussing on

projects within contexts and its different viewpoint of scientific realism. Studies referred to are all in the area of the impact of crime prevention initiatives , (neighbourhood watch, for instance) which is about the measurement of less of something. This approach has been used because of the appeal of the causality of generative mechanisms (see previous section on evaluation models).

The evaluation business in America appears to have been booming for some time. Whilst the development of evaluation theory there has been prolific, it is useful to bear in mind that there is a different voluntary/statutory relationship there and the 'programs' evaluated are multi-sited large scale projects. Evaluation in America always involves a professional evaluator and the methods used are fairly prescriptive. Some of the theorists have influenced evaluation here such as Weiss (1983) in relation to stakeholders, Lincoln and Guba (1985), naturalistic inquiry as the forerunner of critical evaluation, Patton (1990), toolbag approach.

Certainly in the 1980s there was a proliferation of prescriptive texts on evaluation. The most comprehensive overview of evaluation theory in America is that of Shadish et al (1991) which follows its history and development (somehow without focussing on those authors who feature in UK texts on evaluation). To sum up its development, he says (ibid p.32)

‘ Exclusive reliance on studying outcomes, yielded to inclusive concern with examining the quality of program implementation and the causal process that mediated any program impacts..... ..yielded to qualitative methods (Guba and Lincoln 1981) multiple stakeholder groups (Weiss 1983) fitting evaluation results into highly political and decentralised systems (Cronbach 1980)better integrate diverse concepts and methods in practice (Rossi and Freeman 1985).’

There are three histories of evaluation found in the first chapters of the books by Marsden et al (1994), overseas development perspective, Everitt

Pawson and Tilley (1997), realistic model of evaluation. Lees and Mayo (1984) also put evaluation within community work within context. Patton (1990) is useful for the 'toolbag' approach to evaluation (varying your methods in relationship to appropriateness for context) or different tools for different subjects or a combination, also termed a portfolio approach.

There have been conferences on evaluation such as that held by the Combat Poverty Agency (1991), which produced a smallish compilation of different evaluations which illustrate best practice American management evaluation (McKeown 1991), and project self evaluation (Tobin 1991) very clearly. A number of universities carry out evaluations in their local area and will hold the reports.

I think it is useful to bear in mind that the work is not the same as the outcomes. Unless users are progressively involved in setting the aims and objectives of an organisation, evaluation is about the effect of the work, partly expressed as outcomes for local people. Where users are more involved there will be more overlap between the two. Project self-evaluation for development will be based on the negotiated agendas of those involved with the project on a day to day basis, reflected in the work and outcomes. All the models reflect a world view stance.

Is a critical or participatory world view more likely to bring about social justice? Is it one or the other? How does this relate to a participant for whom the question is meaningless in this form?

The following is a discussion of the relative merits of participatory and critical evaluation; and how these relate to a theoretical base. I have ignored American management evaluation because it is quite clear and within the toolbag it has its place as a quick picture/broad stroke tool. I have also left out experimental evaluation because it is not relevant to the central issues of community projects, because of the need for constraints

central issues of community projects, because of the need for constraints on variables and possible outputs. I have worked on community projects in various settings for the last twenty years and whilst passionate about emancipation and such like, I am also clear that if anyone is to be emancipated, it will be to follow their own value system not mine.

I had some difficulty wrestling with the topic of whether a participatory approach as in participatory action research is critical or interpretive. The question seems to lie at the heart of community work as a whole so it has been hard to separate the topic of critical or participatory evaluation for small scale community projects from the wider question. Hoy and McCarthy (1994) in their dialogue about the relative merits of hermeneutic and critical perspectives, polarise the two perspectives, referring to 'rational agents or cultural dopes'(ibid p.250), (choice of roles for actors within setting). As far as I can see, these roles could be equally applicable to either perspective: people could be dopes because they don't know beyond their own consciousness or if the only rational argument is subjective, then people are rational agents, when expressing their own values. Hence although I find that community work naturally allies itself with critical theory, I find this relates to the superscript, the macro level, which has never been adequately reflected in the practice as in 'large hopes and small realities' (Specht 1981). So are we evaluating the 'large hopes' or the 'small realities' or the interplay between them? Reason (1994 p.1) offers me the solution to this problem that at least illuminates the issue. He defines a participative world - view as the interplay between 'original participatory stance' and 'automated differentiated consciousness', the latter of which includes perceiving the world in a purely intellectual way. He sees the major pitfall for automated differentiated consciousness as that of 'mistaking the territory for the map'(ibid p.28) . In bureaucracies and professions, the map takes on a life of its own: sometimes more accurately describing the territory, sometimes diverging from it. We have to refine or reconstruct the map, starting from

Then at least we will know how accurately the map reflects the territory. I am not going to consider the interplay between the map and the territory.

As I understand it, a participatory evaluation attempts to define the area to be studied with users of a project, and involves them all the way (or as far as they want to go) in discussing what sort of information is needed to inform this, how best to get this information, how to analyse it and what recommendations they will feed back to whom and what changes they wish to make in the light of these recommendations. The evaluation is used primarily as a developmental tool.

A critical evaluation will see the area of focus as the exchange between project users and other influential stakeholders, requiring an element of education for users to adequately express their concerns. I see the role of evaluator here more as mediating advocate but a critical evaluator would see themselves as assisting people's reflectivity as part of an action-reflection cycle. Critical evaluation does deal with issues of power.

The status of users' knowledge - if your participation is high on my agenda, surely what you then say has to be as well?

Any empowering is a process - I want to accept users' knowledge and concerns as valid, their view of the world in relation to a community project that impacts upon their lives is more important than mine. I think I am really arguing in favour of 'conscious partiality' in favour of users views, as feminists have argued in relation to women's views. If I start thinking, you only think like that because you have been oppressed by society's structures, my agenda rapidly becomes different to yours.

Rahman (1993 p.220) who does slightly idealise the people says ' if the people are the principle actors - the relevant reality must be the people's own, constructed by them only'.

I think critical theory does value people's knowledge but there is an element of 'false consciousness'. Participatory action researchers seem to place their research within a critical perspective, whereas I see participatory evaluation as within an interpretive perspective. 'Critical' is used loosely to refer to almost any synthesis with an element of dialectic. The language that accompanies critical theory seems to echo that of community work, because of the usage of 'emancipatory' in relation to Habermas' third type of knowledge and I am not sure that this meaning of emancipatory is the same as the community work use of similar words although the language is the same. There may be interplay between different agendas but I do not think synthesis necessarily takes place, more a series of temporal stances, which being based on different value systems, separate under pressure. I agree with Rahman (1993p.205) that we lack an authentic people's view.

In terms of knowledge systems, there seem to be two schools of thought - firstly that we transfer our knowledge to the people (our methods of conceptualising, measuring, analysing), secondly that we learn from the knowledge systems of the people, starting with their methods of conceptualising, measuring, analysing. A purist would go for the knowledge systems of the people. However, we are working within a reality where temporal stances on agendas have already been negotiated. I cannot help feeling, when reading a piece of participatory action research such as that carried out probably to involve local parents in the idea of a family centre, (Everitt 1996) that participation levels here are as good as they are going to get. This involved two hourly sessions once a week for a period of six months, using groupwork and a range of media in a supportive environment, to precede the transfer of skills in community research. It is certainly an area worth exploring as Reason (1994 p.28) points out, we use so few of our senses in constructing knowledge in an 'automated differentiated consciousness'.

In the final analysis, these theories are not necessarily separate. Whilst they influence one 's viewpoints and methods - evaluation of a complex reality might draw on American management for the collection of figures to send to funders; participatory evaluation to clarify concerns, community maps, main outcomes for beneficiaries at least as well as having a developmental impact; and where appropriate, where there is a possibility of progress, a critical discourse could occur.

Chapter Five

Methods of evaluating community projects

Part One Outline and reflection on case study

Part Two Methods overview

Part Three Measurement of intangibles

Part Four Monitoring and indicators

Part Five Participatory evaluation

Chapter Five

Methods of evaluating community projects

Part One Outline of and reflection on case study evaluation

The case study is introduced here as the other parts of this chapter use examples taken from it to illustrate different points.

Outline of case study

The case study took place in a small scale inner city project, which was a charity. The activity of the project had consisted of the same strands more or less over the sixteen years of its existence in different guises. These strands were informal educational opportunities for adults (first aid, basic mathematics and English, assertiveness, crafts), a range of childcare initiatives for their children (parents and toddlers, playschemes (3 - 5 yrs and 5 - 11yrs), creches), and some family activities (trips, events). The management of the project had moved from being under the auspices of the adjacent education nursery for 3 - 5 yr. olds to a committee of past and present users managing an independent organisation. Latterly the project was built on the progressive involvement of users in decision-making. The project employed one full time co-ordinator, 8 casual sessional playscheme workers, a toddlers organiser (twice weekly), administrative worker (5hrs), 6 occasional creche workers and occasionally freelance outside tutors. Most of the casual sessional workers were past or present users of the project, who had been trained there. Accommodation consisted of a sitting/meeting room, kitchen, small smoking room, toddlers and creche room (up to 9 toddlers), office, toilet. Play activities took place in the very large, well - equipped and secure garden of the adjacent nursery with space available inside the building if it rained. Project users were a mix of local families and past and present nursery parents, who came from a wider catchment area. Toddlers, the over 5s playscheme, trips and family events were the activities most taken up by those in the immediate area.

Reflections on case study evaluation

Before looking at a chronicle of the evaluation within the case study, I would like to highlight the main points that came out of it. These were - firstly the difference in agendas between myself, the adjacent agency and users, some of whom were also management committee members. This has been discussed in the preceding chapters in looking at the context of projects and how the differing approaches to evaluation deal with the meshing or otherwise of different agendas. How these translate into criteria for evaluation is looked at in Part Two of this chapter. Secondly, for any evaluation to take place with users - it is necessary to use a medium of communication with which they are comfortable. The chronicle of evaluation within the case study (below) shows the process of the evaluation in outline.

Table 5.1
Chronicle of evaluation within case study

Start designing sessions with co-researcher	Design questionnaire with co-researcher and two most reliable users		Quantitative information collected and written up					
Carry out two joint successful sessions	Each pilot one questionnaire	13 questionnaires completed at management committee	Information re: ethnic minority take up of play-scheme fed back					
Excellent start	Mission refined sessions with management committee	Researcher carries out 6 further in depth interviews of users	Participant observation in smoking room starting from company/fun					
Two of most vocal participants get jobs	Feedback that initial questionnaire too open ended so together amend questionnaire and re-pilot	Researcher interviews 6 management committee members in further depth	answers to questionnaire					
Design but don't carry out third session	Issues re: quality of information and interviewers uncomfortable writing things down	Analyse interviews	Power struggle Chronicle of energy, agenda overlap, participation					
Feb/Mar	April/May/June	July/August	Sept Oct/Nov					
<u>Included</u>	<u>in</u>	<u>ongoing</u>	<u>process</u>	<u>of</u>	<u>project</u>	<u>over</u>	<u>this</u>	<u>time</u>
Refinement	of	aims	with	management	committee			
Continued	negotiation	of	agendas	and	feedback			
Monitoring	information	re: take-up	of	services				
The final report on the evaluation July 1988 was fed-back to the original co-researchers								

The final report on the evaluation, basic research skills training sessions and interview sheets are in the Appendix.

The project which forms the basis of the case study was typical of a small scale community project . This is not to say that generalisations can be made from any results which are specific to context. Typical features were : involvement of users in management, high degree of overlap between different user groups, eccentricities of context, quite a lot of delegation to the full time worker, employment of past centre - users as casual sessional workers.

I started the case study from a participatory stand-point because the project offered a ladder of progressive involvement to users so it seemed at the time that inquiry should also follow this same route. In Chapter Two we looked at participation as a feature of community work and community projects. I did not realise that participation has different meanings for different people: that participation in the transformative process is actually an item from a worker's agenda and that participation from a user's point of view is first and foremost about participation in project life and only secondly about 'having a say'. Participation also implies choice and interest. Participants in the original sessions may have participated as far as they were interested and then their natural energy and interest related either to the summer programme or to outside priorities.

Actually the ongoing work done with the management group on refining the mission of the project and supporting feedback mechanisms within each grouping was more successful than the participatory evaluation itself. I think this was because it built on users existing knowledge systems and did not try to transfer, however experientially, knowledge systems of 'another' as in the form of basic research skills, (see Appendix). In retrospect, I would say that the refinement of aims and objectives, serving as criteria for evaluation, have to be participatory or at very least

represent a stakeholder perspective. The carrying out of the evaluation as 'co-operative inquiry' is a participatory tool, which may or may not be the most appropriate participatory tool at the time in a given context. In this case with the summer programme approaching, users natural energy was more focussed on the summer holidays. Organisation and involvement in the summer programme was therefore the most appropriate participatory tool (see Figure 5.3.1 p.97).

Work on refining the mission of the project, started from users reflecting on what they got out of the project and how to further develop these broad band aims (signposts). The case study clearly showed differences in agendas, which were not completely resolved. Different ways of dealing with differences in agendas have been looked at - participatory, stakeholder, critical. I was not able to use the evaluation as a tool to intervene in the most contentious area of fluctuating conflict between the project and the adjacent agency. A critical evaluation could have looked at ways of resolving this conflict, but in this case, I think it was an eccentricity of context as the priorities of the management committee were not towards this end but towards their stated outcomes (peer group support, services, growth and having a say).

It could be said that the method of evaluation used, ended up as naturalistic inquiry after starting from a participatory stance. The design became emergent and the focus progressed to explore data from users that emerged, including the difference in agendas and lack of continued interest in participatory evaluation. Whilst still working at the project, feedback loops were ongoing. The final report was given to the project but would really have needed to be in the form of an exercise to be authentic.

In this instance, the case study took the form of an evaluation (applied research), carried out by the researcher who was already working within the setting (action research). There were some feedback loops within the

continual process of reflection on action feeding back to the setting and so on. The main purpose, however, of the case study was for knowledge - to find out what users get out of projects and to illuminate what methods of evaluation might be suitable for a community project. Yet a case study is not generalisable. It can be a method informed by reality to give a refined method. I can make no generalisation from the findings of the case study other than a naturalistic generalisation (Stake 1975 p.5) or working hypothesis (Cronbach 1975 pp.124 - 5). The findings of the case study were that users of projects have a different but overlapping agenda to that of worker/s. Namely they come to meet their mates, use services, experience individual and collective growth and to have a say. The worker's agenda here was to create a ladder of progressive involvement in decision-making.

Another tentative finding which came out of exploring why the participatory evaluation had not worked as well as I expected was in relation to participation in projects themselves. Evaluation of community projects has to be interpretive in terms of development of the work and the development of the people. Evaluation for funders can relate to an American management model but some interpretation of this is necessary to illuminate and contextualise. Oxfam (1995 p.21) suggest that 'they ...(projects) can become a distraction, imposing a set of demands which relate more to agencies than to the development of people. Projects themselves place parameters on development and constraints on 'naturalistic inquiry'. These can be diminished by a process of continual feedback in relation to aims and priorities within aims. From the case study, I found that this fits in more naturally with the ongoing process of the project than as a one off evaluation, itself constraining the focus.

In relation to methods, I don't think I was familiar enough with alternative methods of enhancing discussion. What we are looking at is a very sophisticated technique that needs to appear simple but stimulating.

I have already said that refinement of aims needs to be woven into the process of a project. As a full time worker, carrying out the evaluation, the time constraints on oneself and users, who have other pressures are important to bring about an effective, thought-provoking and above all quick refinement of aims. Both the video and the mapping exercises outlined in Part Five of this chapter could act as tools for the easy airing of agendas and also provide a wealth of information for the future refinement of project aims, within the area context. Refinement of aims, context (mappings) and discussion of highs and lows over a period of time could be easily woven into process, with thought given to suitable media, and would provide a base-line for airing all areas of the project. Who this is done with will reflect the level of participation within the project.

The conclusion of this study picks out lessons learned from this evaluation and from examination of the different approaches to evaluation, to offer a loose framework to self-evaluation within a small scale project taking into account implementation and timescale.

Chapter Five

Methods of evaluating community projects

Part Two Methods overview

Real world considerations in relation to methods

This chapter is about how to evaluate so the following overview is preceded by a short discussion of real world issues that impinge on evaluation. Evaluation is a real world activity. Although community work continually redefines itself, both in the way it constructs social justice and in innovatory methods to bring this about, evaluations or even evaluative projects are enacted for a purpose. Before looking at methods associated with broad types of evaluation, it is worth bearing in mind that in the 'real world', purpose will dictate both the methods and the theory they relate to. As I have already said, there are three basic reasons for evaluation: for knowledge, for development of practice and users skills; to account for investment of funding or resources or to do this to attract further funding. There will be some methods which are more suitable to a specific purpose than others. My purpose in looking at how to evaluate within the setting of my case study was primarily for my own knowledge, to answer the question 'What do users get out of a project like this?' My methods were therefore qualitative and participatory as my purpose was to explore the project from the users point of view. Evaluating for the development of users requires a participatory approach, which offers the opportunity for users to develop their knowledge and skills. Evaluating to improve practice has the slightly different focus of the practice, which is the interface between users and workers. This then involves the agency (where this is not a management committee of users). These interfaces now need to be taken into account by a stakeholder approach. Partnership projects for example would require this sort of approach to clarify aims and outcomes across a range of views.

Resources available for evaluation significantly affect its methods. Participatory evaluation is time consuming, outsider evaluation is expensive and setting up interwoven systems of monitoring and evaluation, usually with outside support is both time-consuming and expensive. Having said that, evaluation can be seen as a good investment in terms of future funding, skills development and feedback to the project as a whole. For a worker, it is at least equivalent to an extra strand of work over its timescale.

From my own experience of monitoring and evaluation in relation to funding applications, I get the impression that most funders are well disposed to the involvement of users in decision-making but they want this information as an addition to a broad stroke (American management) view. It has usually been sufficient to provide information relating to the broad framework, whilst illuminating a specific area of work to convey good practice. Otherwise their requirements vary from quarterly monitoring of self set milestones reached, implementation of equal opportunities, outputs, and they show an interest in the organisation's further measures of outcomes. For amounts under £1000 very little is required, the onus being on the organisation when they seek to reapply. To some extent annual reports have previously been used for this purpose - giving an overview of the organisation, and its work and projecting its successes. For this purpose, they are slightly too reliant on 'testimonials' (evidence of individual growth and achievement) though once again the balance of participation is an issue. Both Feek (1988) and Feuerstein (1986) have very clear sections on defining the purposes of evaluating and Feek also lays out the pros and cons of using insiders and outsiders. Another issue in relation to evaluating in the 'real world' is what sorts of methods to use to evidence process and participation.

Methods in relation to evaluation

Evaluations of small scale community projects, involving users in their management will take the form of case studies because they are context specific. They may be woven into the process of the project but they will still be particular. Stake (1995 p.7) comments that 'the real business of case study is particularisation not generalisation. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different to others, but what it is, what it does'. He also suggests that 'seldom is an entirely new understanding reached but refinement of understanding is'. Yin (1993 p.121) also comments on the use of case study evaluations to cover both process and outcomes. However, Stake seems more convinced of the validity of subjective data, whereas Yin prefers multiple case studies for replication.

Qualitative methods look at the simplest level of describing and understanding actors' interpretations of reality. The question of value is central as are the notions of value within frameworks of interpretation. Therefore even where there is little participation in the research process, 'member checks' will be taken to ensure categories have been accurately developed. The co-production of aims and objectives and development of indicators against which these can be measured may also be part of a partnership/stakeholder approach (Dixon 1995 p.331).

American management evaluation depends more or less completely on monitoring information, and the categories for which these provide evidence may or may not be worked out together with other stakeholders. We have seen that there is a tendency for strategic plans to bear the input of professionals and for more operational plans that of the community. Also funders have already set their criteria for grant giving and a project wishing to receive funding will need to describe activity in terms of these pre-set criteria, in relation to for instance take up by target groups (e.g. number of children from ethnic minorities using the playscheme). The

National Lotteries Board has returned to its original looser banding for considering funding applications as opposed to a period of banding grants around issues. The development of milestones and targets associated with objectives is another balancing act - you want a degree of clarity about what you are aiming to do, but where this becomes too detailed and rigid, it inhibits the following up of unpredicted outcomes and the development of issues, only latterly perceived by users to be of importance. (see Guba and Lincoln's (1985) table after Willems and Raush relating to constraints on antecedent variables p49). The issue banding grant period of the Lottery illustrates this point. Working on a family project with elements of health, childcare, informal education, which offer a lot of room for manoeuvre, two consecutive bands of funding related to health and disability and then informal educational opportunities. With funding uncertain after a year, there must be a number of organisations, who slanted their work slightly differently in order to fall within one or other of these bands.

There are issues in relation to access to community projects that will tend to bear on methods used. It is difficult (though not impossible) to gain access as an outsider unless through a trusted gatekeeper and for any consideration of process within a project, users would have to feel comfortable with the evaluator around. This is probably why evaluations run by community projects, tend to be more action-research oriented. There is also the issue that knowledge is not taken away but fed back into the project. Table 5.2.1 on the next page covers the main methods associated with different types of evaluation. This table follows on from Table 3.1, itself drawn from the three histories of evaluation mentioned. Everitt (1992) sets out a value framework for research-minded practice (her term for ongoing evaluation) and says (ibid p.38) 'the sixth principle (that of challenging oppression) overarches all others. In the event of a clash between it and any other principle, it should take precedence'. I

have merely extended this idea of an overarching value stance informing methods to each of the evaluation models.

The prime value stance implies a possibility of methods accommodation. For instance, where a participatory evaluation stance is taken, users might decide they wanted to design a tick box survey, in relation to an issue where depth of response had some significance. The prime value stance is for participation so it might be better for a tick box survey to be produced, used and the information compared with different types of information, which would then be a learning experience.

The column relating to who carries out the evaluation is included because evaluation is about criteria (broad areas of mission bands), derived from value judgements about what an organisation should be doing. Data is then found to evidence these criteria. The co-production or outside production of criteria then becomes important.

Table 5.2.1
Methods associated with different evaluation approaches and prime value stance

Type of evaluation	Methods	Prime value stance	Carried out by
Experimental	'scientific' control group experiment to eliminate variables	validity	outsider outsider criteria
American management	utility focussed monitoring of pre - set indicators quantitative	value for money comparative worth	outside criteria monitoring information collected by insider
Pluralist/ Stakeholder	interviews meetings of stakeholders	multi-faceted reality	outsider to interview co-produced criteria
Participatory	informal training of participants co-researching: question definition methods, data collection, analysis and use - creative to facilitate above	developmental gains discrimination in favour of users perceptions	insider criteria insiders
Critical	creative informal training to equip for discourse guided group discussion	exchange between stakeholders - with a view to outcome for less powerful	emergent criteria

Whoever carries out the evaluation , projects are already rich in data, however haphazard - people's memories, photographs, major crises and successes, copies of funding applications, minutes of meetings, which can fill the odd gap that interviewing and memory leaves. Both Patton (1987) and Everitt (1996) discuss skills needed for evaluation in creative terms, including the possibility of using alternative means of communication - video, photographs, drama, song, story-telling. It doesn't really matter what form the data is collected in, in relation to evaluation for development as long as the facility fits the culture of the group and enhances either involvement and enjoyment or the actual collection of the data. This is quite important because of our own reliance on knowledge from the intellect, expressed in writing, when there are other ways of knowing and other means of expression.

I am glad to say that participants in our session on basic research methods (developed with a user/co-researcher with a view to carrying out a participatory evaluation) identified all the main methods of research - namely experiment, counting, asking (survey and interview), observing and also identified difficulties in measuring more intangible elements such as atmosphere.

I haven't included participant observation in the list of methods because it is actually quite hard to place. It is obviously interpretive but the relation of researcher to researched is similar to the positivist position of subject to object where those observed do not have access to the data collected. Participant observation is an anthropological technique first used by Malinowski (1922 p.25), the aim of which is to 'grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, realise his vision of his world'. Nelson and Wright (1995 pp.43 - 50) explore the possibility of any synthesis between participant observation and participatory research. They describe the limits to the 'participatoriness of participant observation' (ibid p.50) as it needs to be dialogical to construct people as potential agents. They also

introduce the idea of participant observation up as well as down. In a project situation, process indicators might be best evidenced by participant observation by a number of people at different times. A pilot for this could include, a couple of users attending a workers or inter-agency meeting as participant observers. Perhaps a more pragmatic view would be a short video, of different parties' opinions, made by local people. This would serve a similar function and would also be experienced as exciting and educational. Working in a mining village, with issues relating to the relationship between young people and the elderly, the making of such a video (one full week with outside expertise), meant that at least both sides had a medium for listening to what the other was saying.

Within my case study, I carried out two weeks (on and off) of covert participant observation, basically to triangulate and to explore further what I had found from discussions. I accept that this was questionable and that was why I did it for a short period of time only. Starting from a participatory stance on evaluation, I then moved to a covert role. However, I was not privy to any setting, that I was not already accepted in as a worker. I could have been in that same situation, reflecting on what was happening, with a view to following up some strand of work as opposed to reflecting on the quality of the discussions, social arrangements made, and elements of exclusivity to inform this research and had already had permission from the management committee to use one half day per week 'for study'. It was even part of my job description to assist the management committee in monitoring and evaluating the project. I should however have explained what I wanted to do (I don't actually think there would have been a problem) and then worn a small badge of some sort, so people could distinguish between when I was there as the worker and when I was there as an observer. There was also an element of dismay and then curiosity (if people were coming primarily to meet each other and offer each other support - what does that say about

my own input and a job description that has the worker's prime role as 'assisting the management committee of users to manage and run the project').

I am therefore including my observations, which were, of course, the most revealing part of the exercise, because I came to see the project through 'users' eyes, in a way I had not done previously. Most peer group support happened in the small smoking room at the rear of the project. This was of course discriminatory to non-smokers but progression to the smoking room tended to reflect increasing involvement in the project. The other large area was also used for drop-in purposes, but these tended to be slightly more specific (coming for courses, waiting for partner, bus). This larger area was by far more comfortable. What users valued above all was this drop-in facility, because it led to peer group support. The rest of the project's facilities were by way of 'light entertainment', apart from the playscheme. I had not previously realised that inclusivity, also included exclusivity. As a method then, participant observation has a lot to recommend it, both in terms of process indicators and as Nelson and Wright imply as an inherently reflexive stance for a number of parties.

Cresswell (1994 p.157) suggests that there is no single stance for qualitative researchers on topics such as validity and reliability. He says that 'early qualitative researchers felt compelled to relate traditional notions of validity and reliability to the procedures of scientific research... Later qualitative writers developed their own language...establishing quality criteria such as 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity'. His stance is to triangulate (to find convergence among sources of information), to take 'member checks' (feedback any analysis that is not co-produced); identify how informant and participants will be involved in all phases of the research. Elden (1981 p.254) points out that in any research design one makes the following decisions: problem definition; methods choice; data analysis, use of findings. Any evaluation will include the above four steps

even where the design is emergent or where a system of ongoing evaluation and feedback is put in place.

The following discussion on measurement, measurement of intangibles, monitoring, indicators, participatory evaluation, and a suggested flexible framework for the evaluation process, really explores those areas where there is lack of clarity. Issues which are already clear such as measurement of tangibles are covered in outline. Monitoring is included as a separate section because it is really about systems to evidence criteria for evaluation. Indicators are the marker flags of such systems. The section on the measurement of intangibles looks at how to arrive at these criteria.

Chapter Five

Methods of evaluating community projects

Part Three Measurement of intangibles

'The formula n = number of voluntary hours generated

$$n = \frac{((a.b1.d1.f) + (a.b2.d2.f) + (a.b3d3)}{(a.c.e.)}$$

(Bell 1992 p.36)

'As long as there's tea and coffee, who gives a toss'
(Management committee member Oct. 1997 - response
to how they feel about the project)

As the two examples above show, we are dealing with two different languages on projects and in general. Bryman (1988 p.23) suggests that the positivist leanings of quantitative research has led to the 'commitment ..to specify the meaning of particular concepts precisely and to develop sound measuring procedures, which will stand for them'. He distinguishes (ibid p.23) between concepts, 'classes of objects which seem to exhibit a commonality .. to facilitate this exercise, we give a name to this collectivity and we now have a concept' and ' the operational definition of the concept so we can measure it and develop a precise yardstick for discerning its presence or absence..' This links to concerns about validity (does it actually measure what its meant to measure) and reliability (will the measurement be the same over time) and also the interplay between theory (concept) and data (in a self - constructing and emergent world, the concepts themselves may be situationally specific and evolving in a data/theory loop). Bryman (1988 p.68) also suggests ' that the concept provides a set of general signposts for the researcher... while the concept may become increasingly refined'.

Key et al (1996 p.25) refer to four types of measuring scale: 'Nominal.- simply distinguishing different features of events; Ordinal - having categories suggesting 'more' and 'less' of a feature but do not specify

exactly how much; Interval- the distance between any two adjacent points is the same as the distance between any other two adjacent points; Ratio - equal intervals and also an absolute zero'. They also comment that 'most social science measurements in fact belong to the first two'. Looking at how one might measure the concept 'atmosphere', it is apparent there will be some difficulties, yet a supportive and welcoming atmosphere must be the pre-requisite of any project work. I am constantly returning to the issue of value and the value of both the concept, how it might be defined and its components would need to be discussed.

Looking at another example, the cycle of a project's work is usually clear to me as a worker see below:

Table 5.3.1

Cycle of progressively involving users in decision-making and management of a project

- ↗ sessional worker
- ↗ officer
- ↗ management committee member
- ↗ section representative
- ↗ user involvement in decision-making
- ↗ users
- ↗ prospective users

but the cycle of work from a user/management committee member's point of view will appear different. Also we have looked at the following process for empowerment by participation:

- validating self with others
- group takes action
- wider links

For these purposes, what is to be evaluated is within a project setting, so the overlapping strands of work such as empowerment by involvement in decision-making processes, informal education, increase of social and support network and group links to the wider world by both interagency

contacts and overlapping issue contacts are all bound by this setting. This makes it slightly easier to develop broad aim bands, which we can then evidence than if we were just starting off, where they would need developing, for example where the main aim of the organisation is at an interface, a Family Centre Network, or the main aim of the organisation is campaigning, for example Child Poverty Action Group. However these organisations can also develop clear aims bands. To put it simply, in relation to measurement, we cannot count our pieces of fruit until we know which ones we are concentrating on. Furthermore, you may think we are concentrating on lemons whilst I am certain we are concentrating on oranges. Whilst we can discuss what you mean by lemons and what I mean by oranges, the best we may arrive at is a temporary understanding of the relative importance of oranges and lemons to each other. Where oranges and lemons are in fact a complex interplay of different factors, first we will need to identify them but then perhaps the best we can do is to compare the interplay of oranges and lemons at one point in time with that at a later point in time. This chapter is really about how we can bring more clarity not only to describe more concretely outcomes, which may sound intangible (more confidence, empowerment) but also about how we can come to grips with these when they are fogged by a complex environment.

I have found the following a useful exercise to clarify a project's broad aims and priorities.

Exercise for use with management committee of users

Aim: To clarify project's aims and priorities
Method: Small group discussion and feedback

Exercise

Write about twelve index cards each with a couple of words describing one aspect of the project's work, for example MEETING OTHER PEOPLE - HAVING A SAY SHORT COURSES- CHILDCARE - LINKS TO OTHER

AGENCIES (one set of cards for each group)

1. Split into groups of three or four and discuss for 15/20 minutes which ones people you think are the most important aspects of the project's work. This will reduce the number to about 5/6
2. Each group can only keep three cards and rank them in order of importance
3. Each group feeds back their ranking to the main group
Discussion of whole group follows

In my case study, the ranking from users was

1. Peer group support for all three groups
2. Services (childcare and short courses)
3. Having a say

If I were to repeat the exercise, I would include a card relating to project resources such as 'PROVIDE SAFE CHEAP ENVIRONMENT from all data sources - individual and group interview, group exercises, observation, the prime reason for people coming and repeatedly coming was to 'make friends and have a laugh'. So in looking at criteria, for judging how the project is doing or to improve it, my first criteria would be participation in decision-making processes and users first criteria would be peer group support. These criteria relate to concepts within which any measurement will take place, 'general signposts'. Whose values do we take? I would go for theirs - translated by Flecknoe and McLellan (1989 p.14) the first criteria would be 'increased opportunities for social networking'. Some of a project's work is a service and some is a process. Service aims indicators are clearer for example Feek (1988 p.2), looks at issues in evaluating two possible responses of community projects, looking at young people's homelessness within an area. The first

response might be a detached project, with the aim of involving young homeless people in taking steps to make their position a community issue. The second might aim to reduce the number of young homeless people in the area by 50% over the next two years. The second project's aims are more tangible than the first. Whilst one might have to keep an eye on the general picture, such as housing benefit becoming routinely available to 16 - 18 year olds living independently, it is more straightforward to ascertain whether the aims of the second have been reached. In the first project, the outcomes might be different to the intention - and there could be spin offs worth looking at. For instance, workers might discover that the young people have a completely different perspective on homelessness but become very involved in making a video project about their lives. Process indicators are harder to identify and cannot be taken for granted, for instance, in my case study, there was a full summer programme for families of playschemes, trips and a camping holiday. Quite a lot of families used all these, as well as being involved in their organisation. by September, it appeared that there had been a lot of social networking over the summer. Is it however adequate to conclude from repeat use that the mere juxtaposition of families will increase social networking?

The complication here is that the agendas have different priorities and apply different meanings to the same word. We are looking at this within the context of community projects that wish to self-evaluate, which limits the agenda mostly to users, management committee and workers. Where

the users form the management committee - this makes two broad lots of signposts. In this case

Users/management committee

meeting your mates
services
individual and collective growth
having a say

Workers

inclusivity
participation in decision-
making
relationship with other
agencies and networks
proactivity of group

From the above, the starting point for evaluation is at least the co-production of aims for the organisation and preferably indicators for these aims. Agencies can develop their own criteria and indicators without beneficiaries but all they will be evaluating will be their own perceptions of effectiveness. When users 'signposts' have been clarified, the process could be widened to reflect a wider view of stakeholders with their 'signposts' and priorities noted. I was originally looking across a range of literature that seeks to clarify the broad bands of community work focus to inform this but it now seems that there is slippage between the work, which is a service to empower people and the outcomes. Priorities relate to people's own value systems. This would have informed how a concept such as 'empowerment' can be broken down into a framework that could be applied to contexts. For example, Flecknoe and MacLellan's (1989) framework categories are : increased opportunities for social networking, improved information and educational opportunities; improved material resources and individual and collective growth. Others Bell (1992), Chanan (1992), Butcher (1980) are working backwards from what they find on the ground, 'what is the extent of involvement in this group', what relationships does it have with other organisations', ' how do those involved see the gains'. As trends in community work change and there are still a broad span of approaches, this agenda is going to be varied and emergent as well, so it might as well relate to the specific context. There

does seem however to be broad agreement in texts that some of the outcomes of community work will involve increased opportunities for social networking; services developed with user, both individual and collective growth will be encouraged by having a say and informal education; resources within an area will increase. There is also some degree of involvement in wider networks and alliances the priority of which varies according to perspective (for some it will be the first priority).

Beresford and Croft (1993 p.205) focus exclusively on participation across 'signposts'. There can be some confusion with the word participation because I think workers use it to mean participation in the transformative process. This implies a number of pre-stages - such as inclusivity, progressive involvement. Participation in the decision-making process will also be covered by this term. Users refer to 'having a say', which is only similar to participation in the decision-making process. They value participation in project life more highly. Process indicators are seen to reflect the route to the transformative process by workers. There is also the issue of process in general - group process, non-participatory process and so on. Participation in the transformative process could include the area of involvement in wider networks and alliances so there are difficulties in arriving at an instrument and separating the interconnecting strands involved. Wider participation is usually part of a worker's agenda and is seen as vital to the project's renewal.

I think that both users and workers sometimes forget the baseline, which Oelschlagel (1991 p.30) refers to as

- ' provision of material resources, rooms, cheap meals, transport to public offices
- provision of resources, advice, interest, representation, listening , time
- provision of a free space, where you can fulfil your own needs, where there are no sanctions, where one now and then does not behave properly'.

This of course could be an indicator of pre-requisites for development, in itself a service. The following framework could be used to cross-reference these criteria from different agendas. This is applied to an example in the next section on monitoring.

Table 5.3.2
Outline framework for cross-referencing of signposts

(Users agenda to form vertical criteria bands, worker/s agenda horizontal indicators of participation within the criteria bands)

Signposts	Range of indicators (identified with users)	Process indicators
-----------	--	-----------------------

Pre-requisites

Increased opportunities
for social networking

Services

Growth : individual
 collective

Having a say

I have had difficulty coming up with an appropriate term for the column headed process indicators. Really we are talking about the cross-referencing of agendas here. Having a say is already included which could cover who has a say (equal opportunities), those who are prospective users but don't come and connections with other groups and alliances. I prefer this cross-referencing my concern with participation in the process with 'signposts' developed by users. Having got these signposts of users views, they stand only as examples of possible signposts. Carley (1981) discusses the necessity of developing clear concepts first of all, before moving on to develop indicators that relate to these.

Measurement against self at an earlier point

Areas that are difficult to look at, such as problem areas, relationships within the project, the management committee's ability to manage could be raised within a session looking at the project's ability to deal with a number of problems, measured against itself at an earlier point. A single example of this might be the project's ability to manage. It could be looked at from a strengths and weaknesses point of view so that what we are not doing well is balanced by a sense of growth and success. It is also possible that few of the management committee were present at the previous point in time, in which case, the focus would need to be on what we are doing well now and what is not working now. I carried out this exercise successfully to readdress the mission of the project. The difficulty comes in focussing on the management of the project, which after all is just one strand of what is or is not working, probably from the worker's agenda. Management by users will always be fluctuating as people learn roles and responsibilities, move on, and are replaced by others so the cycle can begin again. If it is the existence of the cycle that is important, as part of the ladder of progressive involvement, then it does not matter that the management fluctuates. However, legally, the management has to be important. There is no easy answer to this one, a movement towards better management for a period of time is probably realistic.

Possible answers to this are various - to pay volunteer expenses to members for attendance: training at an appropriate pace (usually lagging behind demands of management functions) in, for example, roles and responsibilities of members, fund-raising, book-keeping, preparing budgets, increase of support structures to worker/s whilst management committee are becoming involved (outside supervision, external agency as employer, area workers support group, training for management committee as an employer with worker/s (facilitated dialogue). In the case study all these methods were tried (apart from paying expenses for meetings) with varying success. The training to facilitate dialogue around

being an employer by an outside organisation was useful in some ways but mainly clarified the fact that the worker wanted more support from the management group and the management group wanted more encouragement from the worker. This eventually led to a day away which was successful in refocussing the mission of the project and during which a new leader emerged. Refining the mission bands (signposts) and the management of the organisation are part of the process of a project. They cannot be judged at the end or at a specific point but are a continual process of interaction and feedback. It seems to me that the best way of moving towards a refined mission and better management by people, who have many pressures in their lives, is to slot in exercises and training where appropriate. For instance, in this case training more than once a month was not well attended, so training was offered on this basis, with the occasional exercise at a management committee meeting (for 20 minutes) and the odd away day.

The management of the project was just taken as an example of an area that could be compared with itself over time, after identification as an aim. Indicators of movement within management function are described in more depth on page 116.

Highs and lows to inform agenda overlaps

Whilst refining mission with users, will create criteria for evaluation, we are still left with the issue of different perspectives of others with whom we are dealing. In the case study, the following expanded framework of perspectives existed (Table 5.3.3 overleaf). The above framework shows different perspectives on the most contentious issues within the project. In reality there was constant negotiation in relation to overlap of agendas to try to reach a workable agreement. This worked for a period of time until an outside pressure on the nursery brought about a shift in its desire to negotiate outside its own agenda. I am wondering whether the charting of agenda overlaps would throw any light on the total reality.

For instance, does a convergence of all agendas reflect a high in the project's functioning? Does the management committee's ability to manage coincide with a high degree in the project's functioning? How is

Table 5.3.3
Perspectives

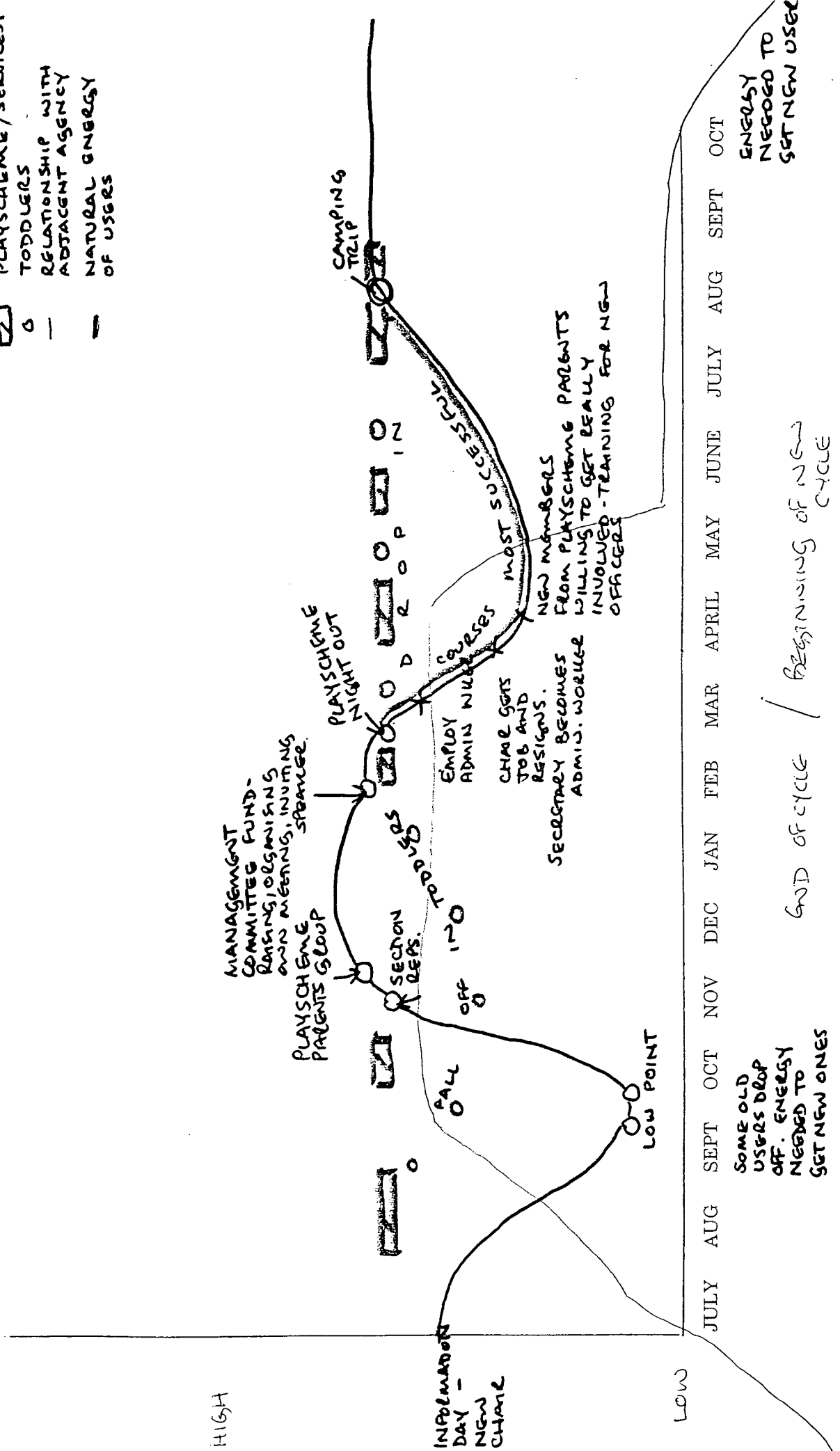
Nursery	Management Committee	Users	Worker
Project can provide extra funds for support activities	Funds are for own purposes Want to 'have their say' Willing to negotiate Not willing to fight long-term	Most did not initially distinguish between the two organisations Want cheap services for selves and children	Willing to negotiate but but commitment to management committee and Not willing to be long-term - buffer zon
Resource for nursery parents	Resource for project/area parents/ overlap with nursery parents	Range of parents Newcomers see existing users as group	Resource for project parents Interested in area nursery
Project services previously part of nursery. Issues in relation to <u>power</u> and <u>control</u>	Autonomous group should <u>control</u> own affairs	Not bothered	Independent organisation Cannot involve in decision-making if 'other attempts to limit parameters
Well-organised hierarachy	Fairly open decision-making to allow participation	Input to smaller decisions	Looser structures to allow progressive involvement

increased involvement in decision-making reflected in the take-up of services? What follows is an attempt to get it all on one page, recent history and highs and lows included. A critical evaluation might have been able to highlight these differences in perspective and aimed to arrive at a further workable arrangement to move forward. In the event a training day for the management committee was arranged on negotiation, run by an outside agency.

Looking at Figure 5.3.1 overleaf, it appears that the take-up of established services was not particularly affected by outside squabbles or how involved the management committee were. The low point of the year was in the October when half of the previous years drop-in users did not continue to use the project and a lot of energy was needed to attract new users. The highpoint was the playscheme parents group which eventually re-energised the management committee and became increasingly involved, expanding the core group of centre users on a day to day basis. It would be simple if one could say that projects run most smoothly when the charting of agenda overlaps are most convergent. However, here the

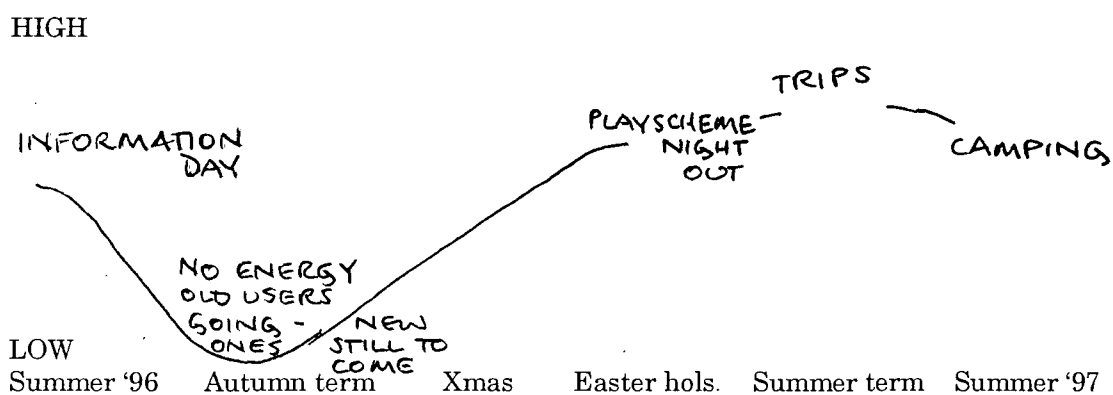
Figure 5.3.1
 Highs and lows over time

Key
 [Symbol: rectangle with diagonal lines] PLAYSCHHEME/SERVICES
 [Symbol: circle] TODDLERS
 [Symbol: horizontal line] RELATIONSHIP WITH ADJACENT AGENCY
 [Symbol: vertical line] NATURAL ENERGY OF USERS



high point of the project's agenda overlap, coincided with a swift divergence in overlap with the nursery's agenda. Whilst services are high up on the agenda of users, the mapping of agenda overlaps relates to a professional agenda alone. I think therefore it might be useful to reduce this exercise to say picking out a number of high and low points over the year and boldly charting these in small groups, using more visual imagery where appropriate. This might end up looking as follows

Figure 5.3.2
Highs and lows over year



As mentioned in Chapter Three, there is something of the experimental about the concept of comparison over time. The real advantage of this is that it minimises eccentricities of context. For instance, a project might be known to be very welcoming and supportive, carrying out a number of valuable services, run by local people. It might also be known as rather lackadaisical and relaxed. Where it is not illegal!, there seems little point focussing on its lackadaisicalness, because that is part of the context that provides a welcoming atmosphere and a number of valuable services. It would be more fruitful to look at changes over time within context (fluctuations).

The next section on monitoring looks at exactly what sort of information we would be looking to collect within criteria bands. Monitoring is often understood as numerical data but is really just a system for the collection and recording of any data, which could be in a number of formats.

Indicators as discussed in that section may be situationally specific and can refocus criteria bands when identified by users.

Chapter Four

Methods of evaluating community projects

Part Four Monitoring and indicators

‘Monitoring is essentially value free. It does not set about to tell us whether the increase or decrease in the number of users is particularly good or bad. It also does not address the issue of whether these are the kind of activities we should be offering users in the first place.’ Connor (1993 p.8)

The following discussion on monitoring is illustrated quite heavily with examples from the case study to look at exactly what sort of information conventional monitoring gives us and also at its limitations. As mentioned in Chapter Three, American management evaluation depends largely on the monitoring of pre-set indicators and milestones. However, monitoring itself is merely a data collection system, which any evaluation will need. By this stage, all the big decisions have been taken - the aims of the project are clear, who is to be involved in the evaluation is clear and the focus and purpose of the evaluation itself is clear. So perhaps all we have to do is to decide how to collect the relevant information. A monitoring system, to keep track of the facets of the project’s activity that reflect its aims, needs to be part of the original discussion. It also needs to be simple, ongoing (collation and interpretation could be periodic), to include different sorts of data and to be in an accessible format. Some organisations have developed the above to include quality assurance procedures on the basis that the only way of ensuring the standard of a service, is to set indicators of quality (these would also cover training of employees). For instance, in the example of a silk painting class cited at the end of this section, a relevant adult education qualification for the tutor could be seen as a means of ensuring a supportive and relaxed atmosphere existed within the course group.

Just moving through the above parts - monitoring needs to be simple, because it is an ongoing activity and can appear as an extra chore (as the



mere recording of information). There will not be a lot of extra time to do this and it would be better to have a monitoring system that is feasible to complete than one which is comprehensive on every front but daunting. Whilst monitoring can be ongoing, the collation and interpretation of this information does not really need to be more than three monthly unless the activity is particularly new or innovative or where feedback is needed more urgently. Everitt (1996 p.133) points out ' whilst evaluation should engage with practice in ongoing and informative ways ... we are aware of the tendency for in-house processes to become routinised and bureaucratised' and she also quotes Patton (1990) ' ongoing evaluation still needs some discrete stopping places to figure out what had happened over time.' Connor (1993 p.42) suggests that monitoring closely for a short period can also provide 'a snapshot of use'. This might be particularly useful in relation to getting a picture of what is really going on with an intangible. It can, for instance, be a useful exercise for a project worker to record their daily activity on the project for, say, one week. Although this is time consuming, one might discover that a lot of time is spent, for instance, in caretaker duties for services.

Monitoring needs to incorporate different sources of data to give a more accurate picture and also to evidence from more than one source. For instance, numbers of attendance and repeat attendance at a playscheme are the simplest form of data available, but this information will be filled out by interviews with parents, and photos/models/materials put together by the children on it, also main points from workers' meeting at the end of the playscheme. Monitoring needs to be in an accessible format so it can be gathered and understood by participants in the evaluation.

Part Three of this chapter looked at developing mission bands or signposts for the project. Monitoring happens within these bands of which services are the easiest to monitor. Connor (1993 p.8) refers to monitoring as ' the regular checking of the progress against a plan through routine,

systematic collection of information. It is concerned with noting differences over time and with providing a regular check against what we are supposed to be doing'. To evaluate services she suggests (1993 Annex C) the monitoring of:

- : scale of activities including fluctuations and repeat use
- characteristics of users (age, area, relevant characteristics)
- frequency of use by individuals of main and additional services
- intended and unintended outcomes for users and their relatives
- impact to other services
- feedback from users and other agencies

In my case study, I looked at scale of use and patterns of use including repeat use and use of more than one service. Characteristics of users in relation to gender, ethnic origin, area and different abilities. Outcomes for users were taken from both individuals and groups. I also looked at ways of recording process, outcomes, relationships with other agencies, fluctuations in ability to deal with difficulties and power relationships. Whilst the first three indicators of range and scale of use, characteristics of users and outcomes are fairly straightforward apart from outcomes for the group/s, the looking at ways of recording was exploratory. The take up of services tells us nothing about the quality of the service but a numbers guide can give us the bare bones which other data can illuminate.

The figures 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 on the following pages look at different ways of describing project activity. Figure 5.4.1 is an attempt to quickly describe most of the activity of the project on one page. Figure 5.4.2 looks at a visual description of the project which highlights the inter-relatedness of different groups and sites the project within its actual environment. Either of these figures could be described with words, and neither is comprehensive.

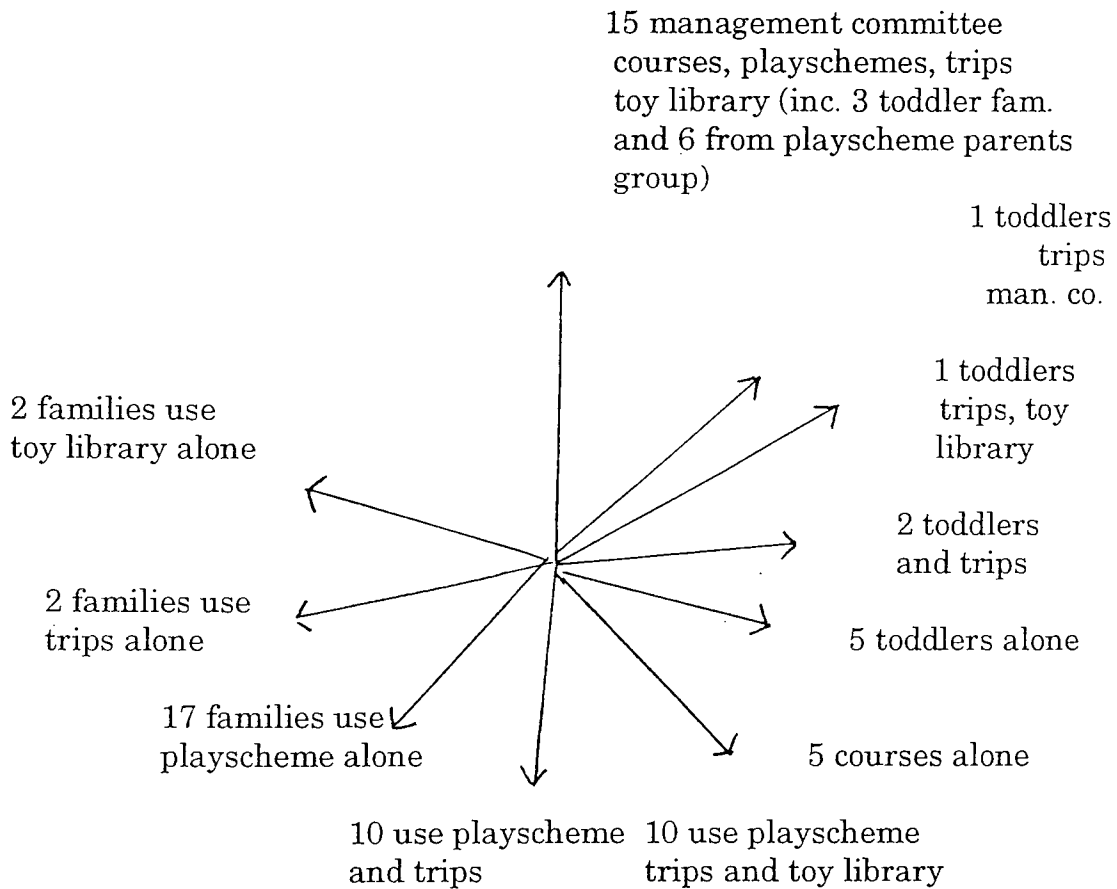
Figure 5.4.1 on the following page shows range and pattern of use of the Centre in the case study over a one year period. It serves to illustrate a broad stroke picture of what is happening and quickly limits and describes the project, whilst implying process (this would need to be supported from other sources). I did not have time to monitor the take-up of the project's drop-in facility other than in a brief period of participant observation but as previously mentioned, it could have been more closely monitored at intervals (snapshots). Feek (1988 p.34) suggests that 'voluntary organisations are concerned with change. If their work is to be evaluated the changes need to be assessed. At very least two snapshots at best a movie need to be produced '.

Figure 5.4.1 reflects a busy project, with a number of interlinked services. However, repeat use needs to be stated (are these the same 15 people or different ones?) as does pattern of use. As already mentioned elsewhere, it does not reflect whether the service itself is the most appropriate one - the funder might have given a grant for increasing informal education opportunities, whereas users are putting a greater value on peer group support, which is not included in the figures. Figure 5.4 .2 on the following page, is taken from the section on mapping of relationships within projects in Part Four of this chapter, which relates to participatory evaluation. It seems to describe more clearly the interwoven nature of all the project's services but does not refer to numbers.

Figure 5.4.1

Range and pattern of use (of services within case study)

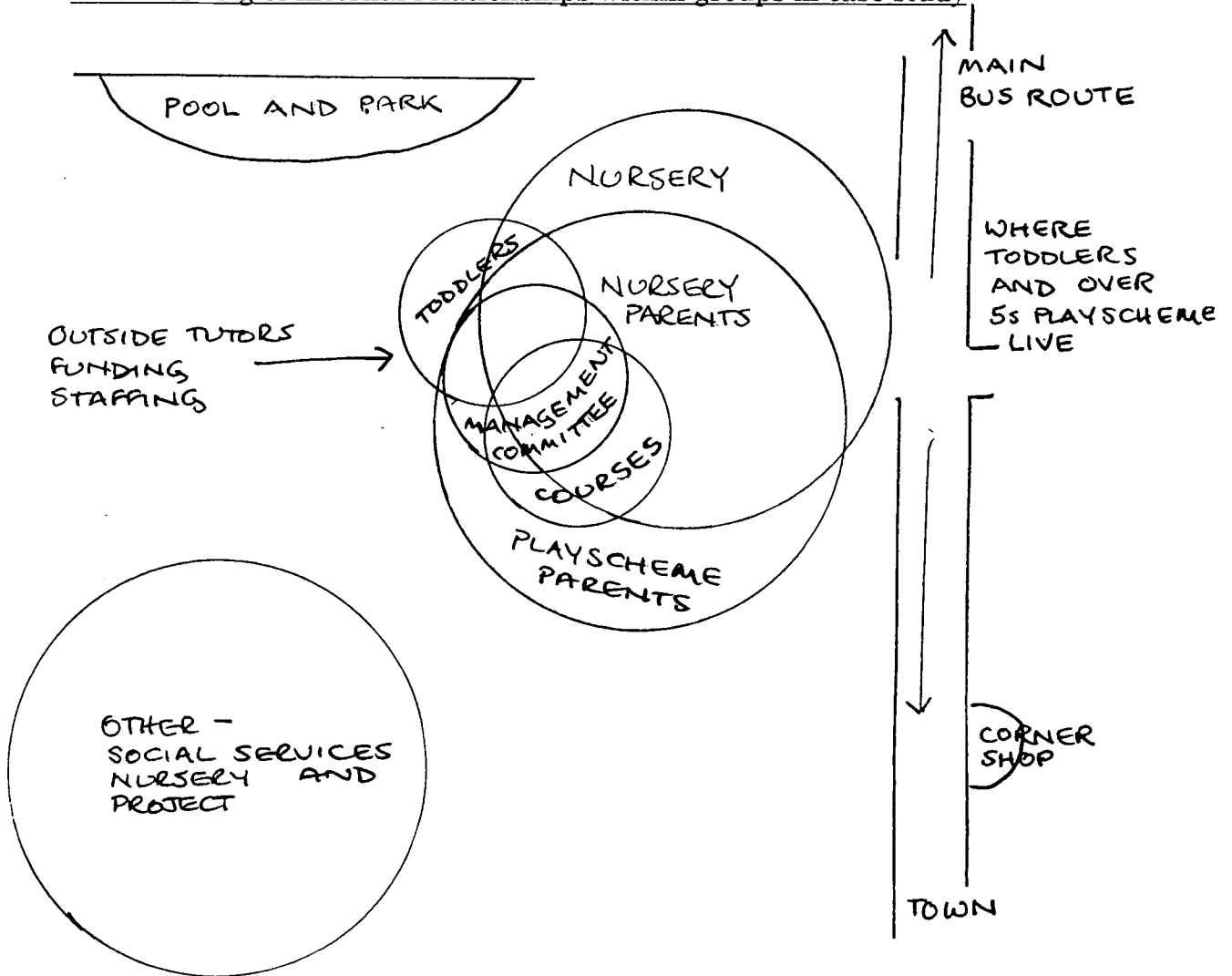
70 families in total



Moving clockwise round the above figure, we can see that out of the total of 70 user families: 15 families used all the services (management committee, courses, playscheme, trips, toy library); 1 family used the toddlers, trips, toy library; 2 families used the toddlers and went on trips and so on round the circle. 'Family' here is used broadly to range from 1 child and 1 carer to 8 (just happens to be the largest number of children in one family attending in this instance) children and 2 or more carers. Grandparents and significant others are described here by the word 'carer'. Relatives with their own children are counted as a separate family. The pattern of use here refers to use of more than one service, not within one service.

Figure 5.4.2

Intermeshing of internal relationships within groups in case study



Here each group is defined by a circle. Overlap of circles indicates overlap of group members. For instance, half the nursery parents used the project services, mostly relating to the playscheme (here described by the overlap of the nursery circle and the playscheme parents circle). A lesser number of the nursery parents, using the playscheme also used other project services (here described by the overlap of the nursery circle, the playscheme parents circle, and crossover with toddlers circle, management committee circle, and/or courses circle).

Environmental siting shows the main road, toddlers and over 5s playscheme areas of residence , and area landmarks.

The following describes further the limitations and functions of American management style monitoring by referring to examples from the case study in more detail. Moving round anti-clockwise from the left of Figure 5.4.1 on page 104 , involvement increases. The strands are not equal in that they have different repeat and ongoing use implications. For instance, the core of the parents and toddlers group came on 116 occasions over a one year period. The shortest course (emergency first aid) ran for a two day block but it appeared to be harder for people to attend a course than to use a childcare service.

The above figures do not cover peer group support (what users valued most), worker support to individual users, or input of volunteers (both informally and formally). Although the project was ongoing, there was a clear cycle of just over a year, relating to the adjacent nursery intake, which overlapped with a core group of longstanding users and new users who remained involved after the end of the natural cycle.

The above was put together from existing monitoring information about numbers attending different activities. In itself it offers a broad stroke view of the range and pattern of use at the project but without further illumination of each area of activity cannot convey any idea of quality. Separate figures for each area such as the following show a high level of repeat use. Although this implies that users are happy to continue using the service, there may be other reasons for this. Figure 5.4.3 overleaf

shows range and pattern of use for one strand of service and also data in relation to characteristics of users. No attempt has been made to interpret these figures although the gender of users and usage by ethnic minorities is noted as is the area from which the user comes. The first two criteria fit in with monitoring of equal opportunities within the project context, information requested by most funders. The area breakdown was significant in relation to monitoring of

Figure 5.4.3
Range and pattern of use and characteristics of users
Playschemes

Over 5s (5 - 11)

(September 1996 - end of August 1997)

Schemes ran over 31 days from 10am - 2pm

(Autumn half term 5 days, Spring half term 3days, Easter 9 days,

Summer half term 4 days, Summer 10 days).

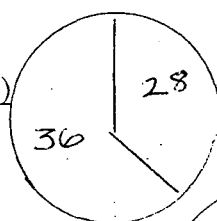
The above covered 6 trips, mainly for playscheme children but topped up by families

Numbers attending (on different days)

64 children

28 girls

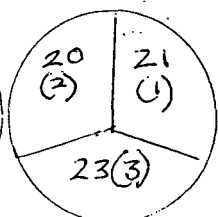
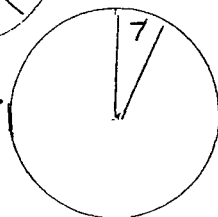
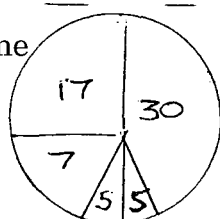
36 boys



Ethnic minority use

7 children attended 1 scheme

Use by area



Repeat use(3 of 5)

ward take up (separate ward small grant giving committees) but also to clarify the services of the project being used by residents of the local area and those who attended the nursery (from a wider cross-section of areas). As it happens the over 5s playscheme was the most popular service for very local families. Such figures relate to American management evaluation, mainly based on collating monitoring information. If one knew the area, one would consider why there were only 7 children from ethnic minorities using the playscheme and then for only one scheme.

This was a useful piece of information for us and was fed back to the management committee to consider.

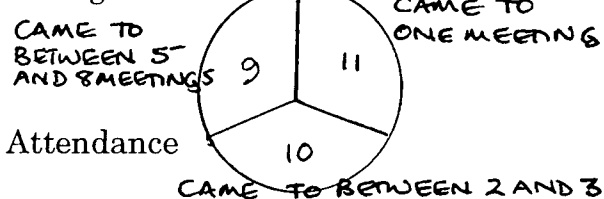
Whilst similar information can be put together about process services, this information requires more explanation and contextualisation. For instance, the two sets of figures (Figure 5.4.4) on the next page treat the two of the project's participatory structures (management committee and playscheme parents group) as services.

Figure 5.4.4

Range and pattern of use of management committee and playscheme parents group as process services

Management committee

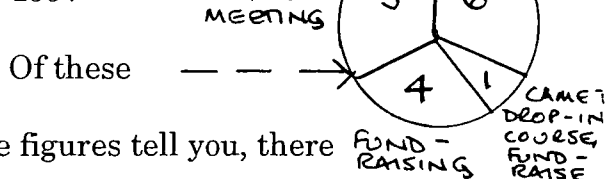
30 different people attended on 8 different occasions from July 1996 to August 1997



Attendance

Playscheme parent group

16 different people attended on 6 different occasions between October 1996 and June 1997



Of these

In relation to the management group, the above figures tell you, there have been meetings every one and a half months; a core group of nine have attended between 4 and 8 meetings, 10 other people have come to two or three meetings and 11 others only came to one. Without contextualisation, you would not know that this period reflected a transition period with the original group changing and a new group slowly forming, including at the end three of the original group members. Nor that three other of the original members were now employed as casual sessional workers by the project and therefore could no longer be on the management committee. Two of the core attenders were representatives of sections and a third was a co-opted member of the board of governors of the adjacent school. The figure of those who attended once or twice includes both those who had been very involved but were moving on to

other things and those who were new members at the time, as well as those who found it was not relevant to them. Without this information, it would be hard to make sense of the figures. Even with this information, it is hard to get a flavour of what is going on. Really attendance would need to be cross-referenced with different information, such as that offered by information from the cumulative sheet, indicating that 15 families came to management committee meetings and used all of the project's services. Also input as a member of the management committee could be looked at, for instance, you might attend all the meetings but say nothing or be unable to attend more than one of the meetings but do the accounts and prepare budgets for the group at home.

Similarly the playscheme parents group met on 6 occasions focussing on matters relating to the playscheme. The group organised 2 fund raising events and had input into when schemes should be held, and where trips should go to. They also applied for funds for playschemes. Towards the end of July 1997, this group had mainly either transferred to the management committee or helped for the period of time their child was at the adjacent nursery and then moved on at the end of the yearly cycle. From the project's point of view, the group was an effective way to involve parents at an appropriate level and to recruit new management committee members. For the period before parents got further involved, this group was much more energetic and pro-active than the management committee. These figures are actually more than a record of repeat attendance, they record the movement of the people who attended the Playscheme Parents Group in relation to the ladder of progressive involvement within the project.

In relation to courses, held at the Centre, these were attended by 33 people (1 male, 6 from ethnic minorities) and ran for between 5 and 20 hours. Over the year there were 11 short courses, ranging from mixed crafts and aromatherapy to helping your child with reading and counting.

18 different people attended 1 such course, 15 came to between 2 and 9 courses. Whilst it is fairly easy to say what specific skills a person has gained during a course (especially where the course is accredited), it is more difficult to draw a link between attendance at a course and movement in life circumstances, which could be caused by any number of outside circumstances. For instance, of the 33 people attending courses, 2 people got second jobs, 4 went on to further education, 1 got a full time job. These changes in circumstances probably had little to do with taking a taster course at the Centre, although they could be related (though not necessarily) to becoming involved in the process of progressive involvement and experiencing an element of individual growth.

Outcomes for users were arrived at by individual interviews, and group discussions. Other organisations who delivered some of the informal education courses had their own more specific data collection systems, mostly focussing on the skills/knowledge transfer segment of that session, with a more general outline at the end. for instance a mixed crafts and aromatherapy NVQ level 1, led on to two silk-painting and batik courses NVQ levels 1 and 2. The outcomes recorded for participants on a a simple sheet, designed by the tutor, related for example to

- ‘ demonstration of ability to use a tchanting (hot wax holder)
- ‘ demonstration of ability to fill in a background with a single colour, using a wax resist technique for the excluded areas’

It is not possible to monitor all aspects of a project all the time but, for instance, in this project there was a mixture of involving parents in decision-making and the developing of a range of services (informal educational opportunities for adults and childcare for their children), one sub-service within each range of service could be monitored for both take-up and process. Using the framework outlined in Part Two of this chapter, monitoring of outcomes and process could be carried out at the end of the NVQ level 1 silk-painting course (12 sessions over 12 weeks) or

periodically (winter term) for the parents and toddlers. This information is given in Table 5.4.1 below.

Monitoring information is that usually requested by funders and can easily be supplemented by other information such as photographs, parts of interviews, testimonials such as those often included in annual reports. This might be time consuming to do for the whole project but can be compiled to relate to one or two chosen strands of the organisation's work. The other point to look at is whether this sort of information merely

Table 5.4.1
Outcome and process monitoring of silk-painting course

Project aim criterion	Evidence	Participation indicator
Pre-requisite		Venue appropriate Welcome Creche Tutor supportive Course cheap Time/day appropriate
Service	Take-up	Course identified by users after taster course on variety of crafts
Growth - individual	'I'm no good at art' overcome Specific skills in relation to silk-painting Use of new equipment Taking of work home and happy to display Expanding willingness to try new things	Opportunities for social networking Setting up frames and equipment requires more than 1 person 2 group members went to another course run by the same tutor in a different agency they not been to before
group	Members brought in pictures/equipment for others to use Group set up and put away the large amounts of equipment Ongoing production of silk painted cards for	Mixed group of project core users and those not previously involved Proactive in ensuring adequate supplies for the following week Possibility of silk painting group as a

	for Xmas fair outside of session	section, represented on management committee
	Some peer group tutoring for those who missed the odd class, if tutor busy	
wider setting	Relationship with tutor's parent agency	Agency came to project on request with range of tutors and examples of work

informs others of the project's work or also can feed back to the project itself usefully and this really relates to the format it takes and who is involved in interpreting the information. Salient information needs to be feedback, such as the relatively low use of playschemes by ethnic minority families in this case. This could just be done verbally at a management committee meeting and there would need to be at least one other person involved in the collation of monitoring information so what is salient is reflected from a pluralist perspective.

A bit more about indicators

This section on indicators looks at their development and use in more detail. The usefulness of indicators is their specificity - they can be designed and couched in the language of each situation. Marsden et al (1994 p.108) identify a situationally specific and appropriate indicator within a project developing fodder-crop regeneration along the Niger river as follows

- ' It had been assumed ...that the primary reason that groups were interested in this activity was in order to ensure adequate fodder for their animals during the dry season.....local people's indicator for success...was if they could offer visitors...milk at a later date in the year than normal. However, discussions with women revealed a different criteria 'ask the children if they have drunk more kundou (a sweet drink also made from the fodder crop)..further discussion revealed that this criterion for success was a single indicator that allowed rapid appraisal of several aspects of the project since if the kundou had been made available to the children, then it would indicate that there had been enough to satisfy the needs of the animals, given the men's control over production.'

More loosely, for example, in my case study a forthcoming 'playscheme night out' might have been a complex indicator, showing

much interest in playscheme as service/
high participation in fund-raising for it
many small opportunities for organising the event
opportunities for social networking - same old faces
or new ones?
implication of future service.

Feek (1988 p.17) looks at indicators for example of the success of a community transport project 'Objective 2 of ... set the target of helping 200 people with physical disabilities to feel that they had gained a greater degree of independence.... What would then indicate greater independence.... so maybe then you should consider the question from the point of view of the person concerned such as: being able to go out times that suit me not other people.' He also points out that 'those are major areas. There might be more specific, seemingly smaller incidents, which also reflect a growing sense of independence such as I went to the movies by myself for the first time ever, I sat at home last night and didn't feel at all concerned about not being able to go out because I knew that it was possible if I wanted'

Even an intangible such as 'creating a supportive environment' could be made more concrete where appropriate, although it might be expressed in different terms by different groups. Some organisations may prefer to have slightly tighter criteria/objectives as opposed to indicators. All activity will come under these headings so keeping track of the organisation's work will involve the collation of information from these sheets, which are for use by all involved - users, management committee members, workers. this is illustrated by the following extract which is taken from the self-evaluation sheet of the Single Parent Action Network (SPAN), based in Bristol. SPAN has been a part of both European Poverty 2 and 3 Programmes and whilst the sheet seems really simple, I

suspect it is actually much more sophisticated than it appears, leading to the ongoing cycle of reflection on action and informing of future action.

‘ Self-evaluation sheet

Name

Activity

Place and date

Which of the organisation’s objectives were you working towards? (Please tick one or more)

1. Supporting development of single parent self-help groups
2. Fighting single parent poverty and discrimination

(and so on to objective 10)

How was it successful? (please number you comments for each objective aimed at)

How was it unsuccessful?

What I learnt

Ways forward’

Different data sources for different bands?

We have then broad bands (signposts) which indicate the aims of the organisation, including the methods by which these might be achieved.

How do we then gather evidence to show that we are moving towards these aims? Especially where an aim may involve intangible elements as, for instance, our first broad aim ‘increasing opportunities for social networking’. The main approaches will be asking, counting, and observing. To some extent the development of broad aims and objectives is a chicken and egg process in relation to the collection of data. It is not really until we analyse the data that we return to the framework, but the framework focusses attention on what we want to know and from whom. Some subject areas lend themselves more readily to certain ways of viewing. For instance, the take up of services can be described numerically; people’s perceptions of different agencies within the community diagrammatically, people’s stories tend to relate to increased social networking and empowerment.

One of the hardest areas to define is ‘collective growth’. I think this might lend itself to tracking over a period of time as there will be fluctuations in growth (both backward and forward). Another possibility is for part of the initial training sessions (and the above if a participatory evaluation implies a training input) to relate to devising clear simple pictograms of process for meetings etcetera to cover areas such as has everyone had a bit of an input, have people been falling asleep, what are the energy levels like, has the group become a clique?, did new members get any information?. This would be fairly easy to co-produce and then

Table 5.4.2
Data collection possibilities for broad band aims

Broad band aim	Methods	Participation considerations
Pre-requisites	Observation Discussion	Accessibility for target group Venue Atmosphere Type of welcome Publicity
Services	Take up	User involvement in development Feedback mechanism
Growth: Individual Collective	Stories Interviewing Process records Successes Tracking	Participatory structures
Wider setting	Mapping alliances over time Mapping of relationships with other organisations and key players	

members could either fill them in at the end of every alternate meeting or a process secretary (rotating) could observe now and again and fill them in. Naponen (1997 p46) suggests a useful breakdown of a group's development within a function into smaller consecutive developments, but it is harder to deal with fluctuations within such a format. From a worker's point of view, I think it could be useful to have a checklist of when not to take action as it is so easy to rush ahead, when management committee members are in the process of becoming, instead of waiting for them to act. Alternatively where there is a clique - a record of attempts to broaden its base and introduce new members. The group's successes and ability to function within its specific environment are best discussed at maybe 6 monthly intervals.

A group's functioning within a specific context can constructively only be measured against its past or future ability to function within that context. Small scale community projects are not in my experience neat and coherent worlds and can only move towards greater cohesion. For example, in relation to the management committee's ability to manage the project, movement in my case study might be seen as

Table 5.4.3

Movement within management function

(functions taken from Voluntary but not Amateur (London CVS 1981))

<u>Function</u>	<u>Expressed as</u>	<u>Before</u>	<u>Now</u>
Managing self	Organising meetings Setting agenda	Worker called meetings Worker and chair set agenda	Secretary calling meetings Chair and Secretary setting agenda
Direction	Taking minutes Active part taken in developing aims body	Development plan to clarify aims	Secretary taking minutes Information day to re-address aims
Accountability	Clear about responsibilities Clear about rules of organisational	Some lack of clarity Some lack of clarity	Have information about responsibilities Clear about who can be on a management committee and need to account for resources
Legal issues	Clear about legal	Some lack of clarity	Degree of clarity
Management of resources			
Staff	Line or direct Selection of staff Supervision and	Self-managing group Training and selection Fluctuates	Clearer Further training Fluctuates

	support of staff		
Money	Financial checks and systems	Not sufficiently detailed	More detailed accounts
	Seeking further funding	Treasurer inactive	Treasurer active
	Register of	Worker applying for funds	Management committee applying for funds
Equipment	Policy for loans	Loose	Tighter Policy for loans

The above is really more for discussion purposes .

In my pilot evaluation of a young mother’s group, the main gain for the mothers interviewed was ‘ ability to assert self more in relationship ‘. I prefer this sort of information to any skills checklist. In the examples overleaf the information is basically the same but the language is different:

‘ But the principle value of the visit has been what it has enabled the women to do. They are giving what they have learnt to their own community With increased confidence and faith in their own abilities, they are becoming involved on committees and joining new groups - they are achieving success at a local level. More women are taking up exams and courses and more women encouraged to join the group. One women now has a job at the Family Centre on the estate. This all reflects back on their on their children, on their community gives hope to others. They achieved more in 5 days in Dublin than we would ever dream of achieving in a year of Adult Basic Education Work’.

human relationship skills
discussion skills
planning skills
leadership skills
goal setting
conflict resolution skills

from Lackey A.S. and Dersham L (1992)
from 72 interviews
with community members
who had taken part in
community development
activities

Worker - at Newbiggin Basic Education Project (1996) quoted in the evaluation of the New Opportunities for Women Network by Everitt A and the evaluation team (July 1996)

Other examples of methods of communicating similar information , might be displays, collages, photos, video. Derricourt and Dale (1990 p.84) suggest a matrix web to best chart fluctuations in the stakeholder arena. ‘In this way a very full and dynamic picture could be built up of what was

going on, how the work developed, how the participants expectations , agenda, communications, misunderstandings, difficulties, goals, interests, ideas, opportunities, alliances and sources of danger shifted over time and in relation to changes that were going on in the whole arena...as a moving picture'. (See mappings on p.126)

Feuerstein (1986 pp.137 - 8) looks at 'mapping for creative learning ' and overlays to show change over time and connections. There are two sorts of mappings we might want to make. The first is a map of the project and its environs, including local alliances. the second is a significant relationships map , which depending on the context, can be amalgamated with the first. I would go with whatever images people come up with. There are definite issues in relation to literacy in community projects and pictogram based mapping needs to be done sensitively as well.

This section has then covered developing specific indicators, fluctuation in functioning over time as an indicator, and different formats indicators might take.

Chapter Five

Methods of evaluating community projects

Part Five Participatory evaluation

The following discussion of participatory evaluation looks at the scope of participatory evaluation, the status of users knowledge, ways of carrying it out and the quality of information it can produce. Pratt and Loizos (1992 p.9) suggest in relation to participatory evaluation in the Third World that

‘A sense of the extent of participation can be had by reviewing the number of stages at which local people are involved in the research process... And if it does not occur at all the stages is the community really disadvantaged by this?..Do they really want to be involved in every phase of research given that they may have ..children to feed, fuel and water to find and dozens of other daily tasks? Perhaps their participation should be strategic rather than total? About the big issues, rather than the nuts and bolts?’

It must be clear from what I have written that I prefer participatory evaluation to other models of evaluation , yet my own attempt at participatory evaluation was only about 50% successful (my percentage) - local people were involved in the design of the evaluation, the criteria by which to evaluate and the collection of data but to a lesser degree in interpretation and discussion of findings. Some findings were however fed back on an ongoing basis. The main reasons for the incomplete success, if it was such (see above quotation) were participants’ outside priorities, relating almost wholly to the lack of income. If I were to repeat an evaluation using the same model, I would therefore either pay participants (see Whitmore 1994) or structure the evaluation to be woven more into the process of the project and to be more dynamic (different, stimulating, mixed methods, better venue and lunch).

The main issue is again the status of users knowledge. Whilst there would seem to be general agreement in texts (Chambers 1983 pp.96-97, Marsden et al 1994 p.29) that ‘people develop their own endogenous

consciousness-raising and knowledge generation' (Fals-Borda 1991 p.14), not all would agree with the latter half of the sentence 'this process acquires the social power to assert vis-a-vis all elite consciousness and knowledge.' In this context of participatory evaluation, we need to know people's views and frameworks, but to carry out the evaluation do we need to transfer 'our' ideas of social science methodology? Fals-Borda thinks not. He says

'In this sense people can choose or devise their own verification system to generate scientific knowledge in their own right. An immediate objective of Participatory Action Research is to return to the people the legitimacy of their own knowledge, that they are capable of producing through their own verification systems as fully scientific and the right to use this knowledge including any other knowledge but not dictated by it- as a guide to their own action.'

For our purposes 'social science methodology' could be seen in the same light as plant breeding techniques, medical knowledge or literacy tuition or can it? If we take such methodology seriously, we are looking at systems of knowing the nature of reality. Freire (1972 p.61) says 'to exist humanly is to name the world to change it. Once named, the world in its turn appears to the namer as a problem and requires of them a new naming'. I was fortunate to have a co-researcher based in my case study who had recently completed a Save the Children NVQ in 'Skills in Community Research' as part of a community research project in the area around my case study. This piece of research was unconnected with my own and focussed on finding out local residents needs within a geographically defined area. Those employed to find out residents views were local residents or well known local faces. They gained not only a researcher's hourly rate for carrying out the task (feeding back into the local area), but also an accredited qualification, increased social network and sense of achievement (from informal interviews with two of the community researchers). The topic areas covered by the 'Skills in Community Research' NVQ, which was developed over a period of four or five years by Save the Children are as follows: aims and objectives of

research; introduction to research methods; community led research; sampling; ethics and reporting back; how to ask questions and questionnaire design; groupwork skills (focus). It could be said that this is the true meaning of action research - to move towards solving the issues (poverty related) whilst investigating them.

I felt latterly that my own unaccredited essaie in participatory evaluation, developed with a co-researcher who had completed the above course, although experiential (arriving at knowledge of aims/objectives, ways of measuring from the starting point of people's experience) was merely an attempt to transfer my mental framework of project evaluation to theirs. An outline of the sessions is included in the Appendix. As far as they went, the sessions were successful, mainly due to my co-researcher's knowledge of where people were starting from and her ability to translate (concepts and language). Participants were engrossed, we had a lively discussion about politics and had to agree to disagree eventually (inter-participant disagreement). The two sessions covered aims/ objectives, process/service, and looked at ways of perceiving. The third session covers different sorts of information and interviewing. By the third week, two participants had found part-time employment and a third had to sort out a gas disconnection, which put an end to the sessions as such.

We had already discussed that one of the best ways of finding out information was to ask people so the two participants who had been most interested, myself and the co-researcher proceeded to draw up, role play and pilot a semi-structured interview (open questions to wide topic areas). On piloting these, we found it was hard to get enough information from people, so we redesigned the interview with equally open questions but slightly narrower topic areas, role-played these and piloted them on different people. At this point, it became apparent that whilst there was commitment and willingness, there was a fear of the 'written' so I took

over the evaluation myself, whilst informing the former 'co-researchers' about what I was doing and running things past them informally.

Whilst local knowledge systems will be more diverse in more widely differing environments, so that the gap between 'our' knowledge and 'theirs' will be greater, what has struck me most forcibly in this study is the gap between agendas of other parties and the primary stakeholders and a lack of familiarity with knowledge systems that express themselves in a written format. In a 'developed' country, it seems the knowledge systems of the 'oppressed', for want of a better word, are more devalued because they have been taught to echo 'our' knowledge systems and there is a lack of community coherence and tradition, supporting local knowledge systems. Communication within a project is usually verbal or photographic (displays), and it is mostly with the involvement of other agencies and funders that the emphasis on the written occurs. Using pictograms is more sensitive in a 'developed' setting, as for instance, Naponen's (1997 pp.30 - 48) depiction of pictogram diaries from an overseas setting as people know the information is usually in a written form.

Whitmore (1994) and Everitt's (1996) participatory evaluations (Everitt's is actually participatory action research, prior to the establishment of a project, but goes through the same stages) involve whole transfer of skills but both take a concerted period of six months. Looking at participatory rural appraisal, (PRA) a technique used in the developing world, does this throw any light on how to carry out an appropriate participatory appraisal of a community project? Chambers (1992 p.1) describes PRA as 'a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and act'. He describes how different techniques and fields have led to its emergence: the techniques being derived from activist participatory research (possibly best translated as community action); agroecosystems - mapping,

diagramming, ranking; insights from social anthropology; field research on farming, asserting the validity of local knowledge systems; rapid rural appraisal, a precursor with some similar methods but with the aim of transferring local knowledge to outsiders so they could build on this knowledge more quickly and therefore more cheaply. I have included these separate strands because I am wondering whether these methods are in fact any different to those used by community workers as informal adult educators anyway, based on the idea of experiential learning.

Chambers (ibid) refers to the following instruments to carry out PRA - time lines, mapping, trend analysis, diagrams of flows, causality, quantities, trends, rankings, scorings, stories, presentation. He (ibid p.23) particularly draws attention to 'sequences of participatory methods', where 'maps become successively more detailed and useful'. Ranking is also a method used to clarify preferences. A matrix form might also be used really to show clusters of indicators about an activity or concept.

He points out that maps clearly show up differences in agendas which can be noted or discussed at the time. The whole technique means that a lot of ground can be covered quite quickly. This sort of technique not only furnishes information from the concept of 'others' but the mere doing of it also initiates discussion which could be of agenda overlap. If we started with the mapping of local landmarks by users, this would then show which agencies they put in as for instance in Figure 5.5.1 overleaf.

Other mappings could include mapping of internal relationships between groups and outline external relationships and also relationships with other agencies. These mappings could fit in with pluralist, participatory or critical evaluation. For instance if a management committee of users need to develop a specificness about the mission of their project against a background of an area plan for their client group, they would need to have an understanding of the perspectives of other interested parties.

Figure 5.5.1

Example of mapping of local landmarks as relevant to local users

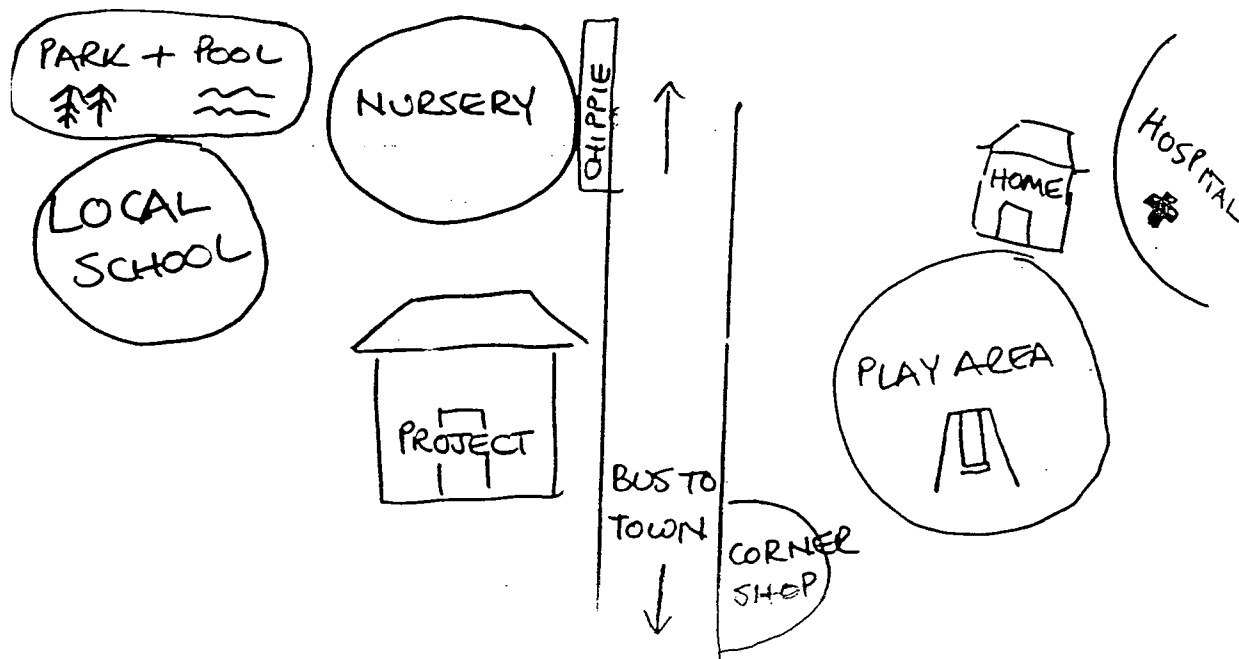


Figure 5.5.2

Venn diagram of both internal and outline external relationships

(after Ethiopian Red Cross Society 1988 McCracken 1991 p.46)

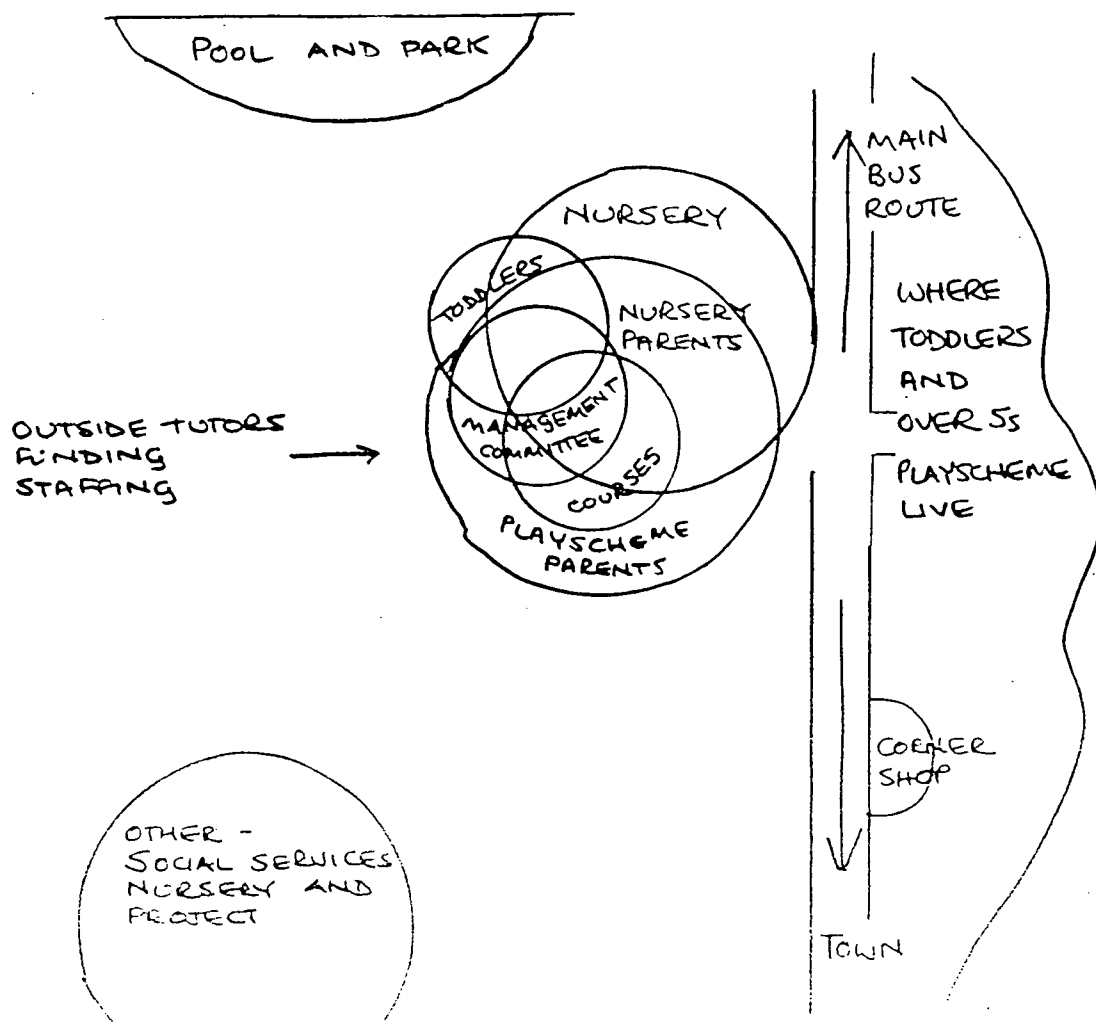


Figure 5.5.3
Relationships with other agencies

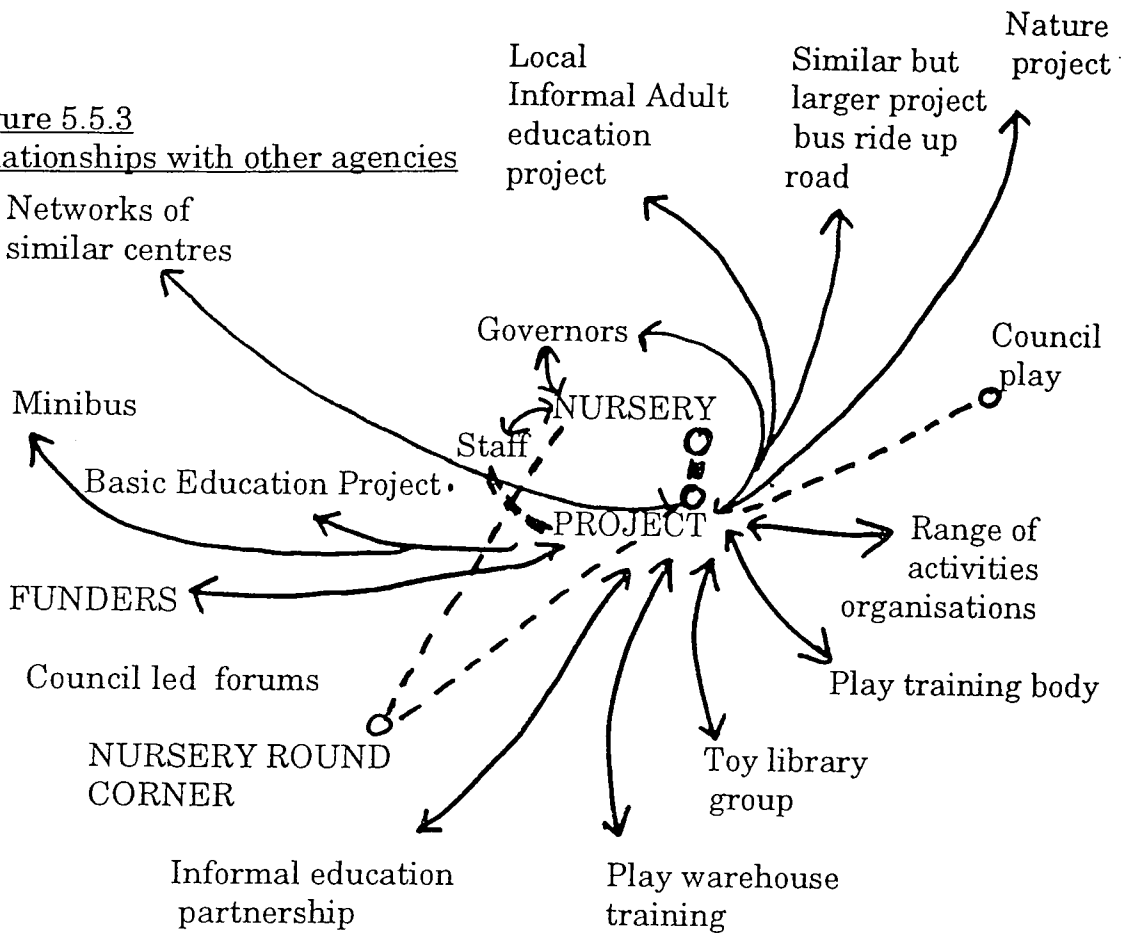
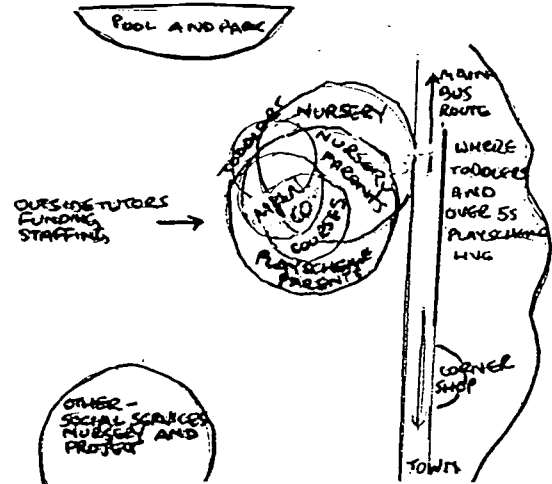
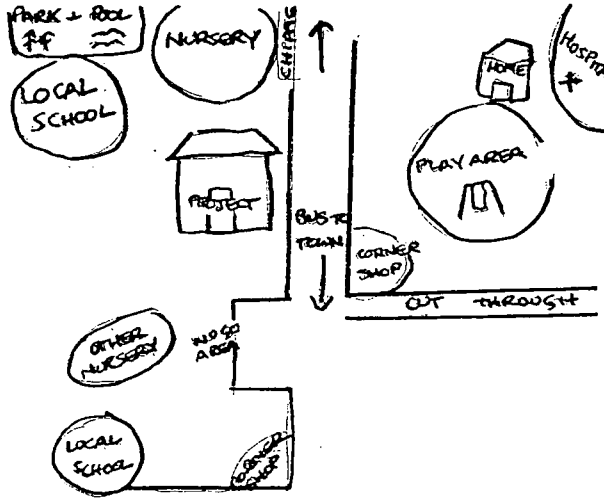


Figure 5.5.2 places the project within a context and indicates the relationship of different bits to each other. Figure 5.5.3 is an example of the mapping of relationships with other organisations. Heavy broken lines indicate complications. These mappings are really illustrative of the point that taken together as shown below, they are a powerful informing tool. They might be separate or overlaid. Figure 5.5.4 sets the mappings next to each other to show how they clearly would clearly outline salient area features, relationships between internal groupings and outside agencies that impinge on the project on a daily basis and relationships with other agencies. This could or could not include a range of perspectives, depending who took part in the exercise.

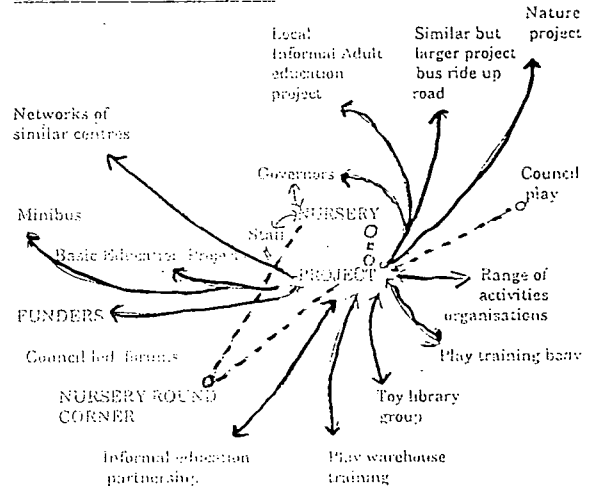
Chambers points out that maps clearly show up differences in agendas which can be noted or discussed at the time. The whole technique means that a lot of ground can be covered quite quickly. These mappings could

Figure 5.5.4
Three mappings taken together

Example of mapping of local landmarks as relevant to users



Relationships with other agencies



fit in with pluralist, participatory or critical evaluation. For instance, where a management committee of users need to focus the mission of their project more clearly against a background of an area plan for their client group, mappings would develop understanding of the perspectives of other interested parties. Oxfam (1997) is now using participatory appraisal in Britain, as for example that carried out in conjunction with the Community Health Council for Berkshire on a housing estate in Bracknell as a technique for starting community development within an area without a focus on a specific project. The technique is clearly of use at the initial stages of development and offers a model for getting together a lot of information from a lot of participants (250 in the above

example) about perceptions and priorities in relation to need very quickly. More generally I would say that participatory evaluation is participatory tool, which may or may not be the most appropriate participatory tool available at the time.

I am left with the common sense approach of appropriateness to context as Pratt (1992 p.10) suggests 'but to ask any group of women to devote precious time to a step by step research participation, might be to ask too much of them'. Participation also implies choice - the choice not to participate or to participate to the level of one's own interest. Wilcox et al (1994 p.1) find that 'Effective participation is most likely when different interests involved in a project or programme are satisfied with the level at which they are involved'.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The questions asked at the beginning of this study were: what is going on in community projects? what do participants get out of them? Is involvement empowering? How do we find all this out?

One case study cannot answer all of these questions. It can raise further questions and placed within the contextual framework of the evolution of community projects, their ingredients, strengths and weaknesses, it can highlight areas for further inquiry. The study found that there is a fairly big difference in agendas between agencies, workers and users. Priorities are in a different order: workers priorities relating to participation in a transformative process; users relating to meeting their mates, using services, individual and collective growth and 'having a say' in that order.

Placing projects within a span of community initiatives from large partnerships, through to community groups, user involvement in decision-making occurs most naturally at the overlap of community groups and community projects and becomes more demanding the larger the organisation becomes. The organisation has its own demands which can be at odds with the natural energy of those involved.

Reflecting back on the whole study, my aim was to find out what local people got out of community projects, with the assumption that if this can be better incorporated into the work of the project, this would indicate more participation in decision-making and greater fit of service to need. In retrospect, the focus of this study was too large, incorporating several different strands, including: how to evaluate community projects, what users get out of projects; and how to monitor participation and process. All of these could be study areas in their own right

I thought the first stance I took was that which stemmed most freely from an interpretivist viewpoint, with emphasis on users' conceptual framework, fitting in with the data /emergent focus loop of naturalistic inquiry, which overlaps the action-reflection cycle of community work. However, the method I chose initially (transfer of basic research skills from researcher to participants) required a level of involvement from participants that was beyond their natural inclination. I now think that this is neither theoretically nor practically purer than other less overtly participatory approaches. The original question came from myself, therefore the focus was mine, no matter how participatory the process of carrying it out might have been. The participatory approach which best built on the participants own knowledge systems was that which was already woven into the process of the project. In retrospect, I would have been in a better position to assess participatory appraisal, (although I have reviewed the literature, both on participatory action research (Fals-Borda (1991), Rahman (1993) and participatory appraisal (Chambers (1992), if I had had some direct experience of this as a specific technique, over and above other community development techniques. The model of evaluation that I conclude with draws from these techniques and my own experience of what works within the setting. However, I have no real way of knowing if participatory appraisal techniques can achieve the liberational promise that is described in their use. Anyone undertaking such evaluation work would need to clarify which of the strands of study is the priority and then look at what is the likely gain from a participatory research process and the likely quality of the participation within this, preferably with an actual experience of participatory appraisal techniques. This would suppose that the primary aim of the evaluation would be the development of the work and the people. Prior reflection on which aim (out of accountability, knowledge and development of the work and the people) was to be paramount in a specific circumstance would also contribute to a clear initial standpoint and influence the selection of methods.

As regards validity, qualitative inquiry accepts subjective opinion as valid within context. This contrasts with the greater 'reliability' of quantitative inquiry. The participative process stresses 'authenticity' and multiple data sources (triangulation) were used here. It still remains one case study, which can only suggest that similar findings might occur elsewhere. The question that emerged during the study, influenced by its process, was eventually, 'how best can project users contribute to the development of the work and the organisation naturally.' It might have been better to do this by a number of workers on projects of similar size and participatory involvement (not necessarily similar issues), working together.

The conclusion builds on the processes used that were the most constructive in terms of building in the conceptual framework and feedback of users into the aims and objectives of the project at an appropriate pace.

This study has been about evaluating community projects. It suggests a useful evaluation (different to utilisation- focussed evaluation Patton 1986). This evaluation would be woven into the process of the project . If the aims of evaluation are for knowledge, for accountability and to develop the work and the people, then a useful evaluation will meet the last two of these aims. The focus is not necessarily on the outcomes, even where there is the feeding back of information to the project but more on expediency. A focus on a combination of what level of evaluation can be slotted naturally into the processes of the project, furnish the twin aims of providing information to funders and develop the work of the project and the people (by refining aims, frameworks and concepts and feeding this back), whilst not taking a greater commitment than people's natural willingness to contribute at a pace appropriate to themselves. A useful evaluation will offer opportunities for participation , beyond the initial production of criteria for evaluation, but will understand that

participation also implies choice and the collection and analysis of data may not be the most appropriate participatory tool to foster participation at that point in time. If it was, this would involve a process of discussion based on existing knowledge systems and thinking around transfer of knowledge systems. Alternative media could be used at either of these stages.

A useful evaluation would require ongoing work on refining the mission of the project. In terms of perspectives, bearing in mind that this could be quite a political tool within the setting, I think this would have to start with the management committee, with whatever balance of perspectives is represented within this from wide range of users, through clique of users, to a mixed board and worker led. First you have to clarify your own agenda before negotiating with others. An initial session to clarify priorities within the mission could then be followed up with a session refining these again with a wider cross-section of those involved, conceptually mapping their concerns and relationships. Highs and lows of the organisation over a period of time could be recorded to illustrate different agendas for discussion. This would be the baseline of a useful evaluation. It may be that a couple or a number of volunteers result from these sessions. To me it would follow from the above two sessions that a further session on 'indicators', including those which are situationally specific would be useful, following a similar format - experiential, small group work, how we know if criteria initially identified are happening. However volunteers need to be given the opportunity to become further involved by following up the aspect of what they got out of the previous sessions that interested them.

All the information resulting from the 'indicators' would need to be gathered either by volunteers or a group meeting, including that which might relate to process indicators and this implies more focussed work on basic research skills (different sorts of information, interviewing, surveys)

and the results interpreted, collated and fed back to the management committee and larger group. The time implications of this are four sessions of at least half a day with a further four half days to work with volunteers/co-researchers on any part of evidencing criteria, interviewing techniques, different sorts of information, collating and presenting it. Doing any of these would have further time implications. It would then become an ongoing process of presentation of findings, discussion, recommendations, refinements in view of changes, and so on. It is not a process to be undertaken lightly but bearing in mind that some aspects of it are already being done in an ongoing manner, such as the refinement of aims and some aspects of monitoring, it seems the most natural extension to arrive at evaluation, woven into process.

Obviously the above is only a flexible framework. It might be that there was interest in looking only at one aspect of the work, it might be that there existed a crisis of divergent agendas, which required outside facilitation to arrive at a base-line negotiation. It might be that users wished to be involved from beginning to end or not at all.

In terms of models it is expedient and borrows elements from them all. From experimental evaluation, it takes the notion of change over time; from American management evaluation, it takes the broad stroke framework based on range and scope of use, from participatory evaluation, it takes the notion of those who are traditionally beneficiaries setting the criteria for evaluation and offers them the ongoing opportunity of involvement to their own level of interest and from critical evaluation, it takes the notion of ongoing cyclical feedback and the highlighting of different agendas, although it does not radically intervene to ensure further agenda negotiation is arrived at. To a certain extent, a second session with a wider group might fulfil this criterion by looking at differently perceived highs and lows over a period of time.

I don't actually think facilitating this process would require wider skills than community workers already use to carry out informal education sessions. Ranking and mapping are in fact very simple techniques that can go straight to the core of the issues. Refining a project's aims would be something a project worker would normally support the management committee in doing, for example, in the production of a development plan or by having a priorities or information day. Whilst a wider group, which might include one or two people who used to come, who could come but do not tend to, and a couple of agencies (including those with whom there may be some difficulties) could present some tensions, done as a small group exercise, mappings and highs and lows will basically be informative (as a baseline for negotiation as opposed to the negotiation itself).

Further research could be done on looking at what users in more than one project get out of the process of progressive involvement and exploring further what they mean by 'having a say' and 'participation'. I would be interested in tracking non-project participatory initiatives to find out whether these continue to develop in a participatory way (if projects create their own demands).

FINAL REPORT to original co-researchers July 1998 on evaluation (seeing what is being achieved) at Centre February - December 1997

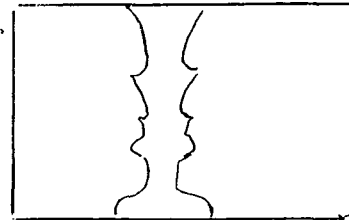
In any situation different people have different viewpoints about what is important. In this case these were:

FINDINGS and PERSPECTIVES

(There was a high degree of overlap between users and the management committee)

<u>USERS</u>	<u>WORKERS/S</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANT OTHER</u>
1. Meeting mates	Getting paid	Retaining control
2. Using services	Work overload	Appropriate services to own clients
3. Experiencing individual growth	Level of involvement of management committee	
4. Experiencing collective growth		

candlestick or two faces?



5. Having a say

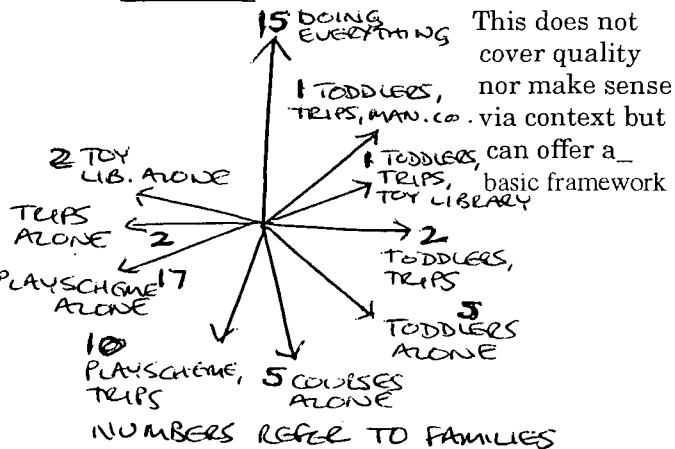
(This information was put together from more than one source - individual interview, group discussion, participant observation.)

WAYS OF SEEING WHAT A PROJECT IS ACHIEVING

1. EXPERIMENT TO PROVE EFFECT

You could ignore the fact that people have different priorities and try to measure what is happening in reality. Age Concern (1970) carried out an experiment to see what the effect of Care in the Community would be on a group of elderly people at home with care services and a group in the same position but without the services. It is almost impossible to control all the variables involved - for instance it might just turn out that those without the services got more help from their families and therefore got on better.

2. MEASURE IT - TO SHOW RANGE and SCOPE



3. STAKEHOLDER - PARTNERSHIP

VIEW or agree to differ. IT'S A CANDLESTICK WITH TWO FACES' In order to set aims, where different people think different things are important - you could set the aims together. This will result in a compromise of some sort. In this case: I'll let you use the Centre for your own purposes as long as you include my clients **BUT**

SOME PARTNERS ARE MORE

EQUAL than others. If a home help organiser makes changes to streamline the service so you get your lunch at 11am and now you have to pay towards it - is this a better service? There are two ways of dealing with this

4. PARTICIPATORY (FINDING OUT with USERS) Using the evaluation as a tool for growth is a greater concern than any one result. Users can participate in all decision-making and activity.

5. CRITICAL - DEVELOPMENT in the RESOLUTION of conflicting views

Outside negotiation with users and significant others to promote discussion and movement (in favour of users views).

or 6. PICK and MIX

Any of the above as appropriate

CENTRE EVALUATION - PARTICIPATORY ? WE DON'T REMEMBER!

I thought participatory evaluation (finding out with users) was the most appropriate to the Centre context. I was not quite skilled enough to do this with complete success at the time. There are more innovative ways of doing it such as using video or mapping.

Things that went well

Design and carrying out of basic research skills sessions with co-researcher, resulting in debate about aims, objectives, service, process and how you would know if your aims were being achieved

Things that did not go so well

Continued involvement of original co-researchers in analysing, interviews, collecting and collating monitoring information
Negotiations with adjacent agency

Design of questionnaires with co-researchers. Piloting, re-designing and re-piloting.

3 short mission refined sessions with the management committee to develop criteria for evaluation .

Feedback of some issues arising to management committee.

It was clear to me that items included in the ongoing everyday life of the project were the most successful - such as the refinement of aims with the management committee, ongoing negotiation of different viewpoints, monitoring information about take-up of services

'It's a candlestick'

'It's two faces'

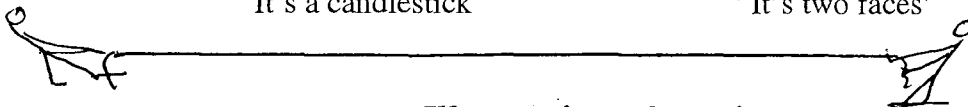


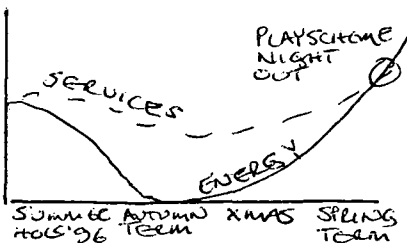
Illustration of tensions

HOW-TO ISSUES THAT AROSE

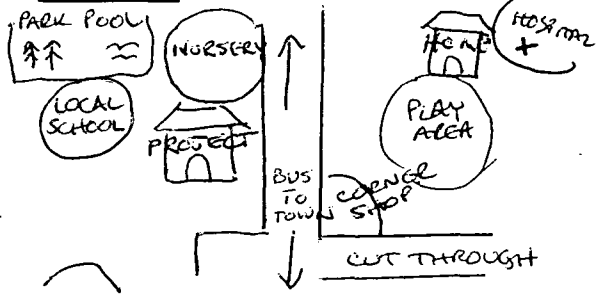
Some things are harder to measure than others. Perhaps what happens at a project is the result of ongoing compromise about different viewpoints. How could this be measured? The two following figures might be ways of grasping all this information.

CHANGE OVER TIME

worse even worse better



MAPPINGS



MAPPINGS CARRIED OUT WITH A WIDER RANGE OF VIEWS could be an unthreatening way of looking at differences.

HIGHS and LOWS over time

A WAY OF DESCRIBING A COMPLEX REALITY (to be done as a group exercise)

Conclusion of research

There are two reasons for seeing what a project is achieving - to inform funders and also to develop the work and the people. Collection of monitoring information, with one strand of work illustrated in more depth (photos, stories) will usually satisfy funders. Evaluating for the development of the work and the people can take many forms. It seems essential to involve users in deciding the aims of a project and refining these. These then form the framework for evaluation and are also part of its process. Techniques such as ranking, mapping, time lines to show significant events and changes over time may be appropriate, also use of video or another alternative media. There can be a gap between the demands of a project and users natural energy.

BASIC RESEARCH SKILLS

for

USERS OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Three training sessions designed to be used with users of a community project with a view to evaluation of that project

April 1997
VRG/LJ

SESSION 1

Aims: participants to be clear what they have volunteered to do
to create a relaxed and non-threatening environment
to introduce aims, objectives, and how you would know if
if your aims were being achieved

Method: small groupwork

Materials

flip chart, large pens

Session plan

icebreaker

outline of sessions

exercises

Divide into small groups of three or four

Exercise 1

You have three wishes to give to the country

What are they? As a group, agree three

Feedback to other group/s. Discussion.

Exercise 2

How would you go about making these three things happen?

How would you know if they were happening?

Discuss in same small group.

Feedback to large group. Discussion

Trainers draw together Exercise 1 (three wishes) as aim

Exercise 2 objectives (steps towards aim)

how we know things happen

SESSION 2

Aims: for participants to understand the different elements of process and service
for participants to understand more than one view of same reality
for participants to have the idea of the difference between quantitative and qualitative measures
for this to take place in a relaxed non-threatening environment

Method:
small groupwork and discussion

Plan for session

Co-trainer to go round group to ask them for a positive thing that has happened in the week.

Other trainer to go round group and ask them for one positive thing that has happened to them in a community context over the last couple of months (any context could be film, church, shopping centre, project, night out with friends)

EXERCISE 1

Split into small groups

As a group write down two occasions for each person when they have had a positive experience in a community context (including experience already mentioned). Have a think about the elements that made up this positive experience.

Feedback to larger group. Discuss.

EXERCISE 2

As a group write down all the elements that make up a good school.

Feedback

Break

EXERCISE 3

Following on from how you would know if your aims were happening (first session), look at

Film/ Creche / Night out / Training course

What are the elements that make up a successful one of these from everybody's point of view?

As a group discuss and feedback to main group.

BASIC RESEARCH SKILLS

Summary sheet to participants

EXERCISE 1

You have three wishes to give the country
What are they?

You said:

- NO DEPRIVATION
- MAXIMUM HEALTHCARE
- FULL AND EXCELLENT EDUCATION

EXERCISE 2

How would you go about making these three things happen?

You decided

- achieved by
 - NO DEPRIVATION
 - MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM PAY
 - CUT UNECESSARY SPENDING
 - NEW HOUSING LAWS
 - BETTER HOUSING
- achieved by
 - MAXIMUM HEALTHCARE
 - BETTER OFF OPTING OUT
 - STATE CARE
 - MORE PLACES FOR STAFFING
 - MORE HOSPITALS
 - HOSPITAL STAFF HOURS LIMITED
- achieved by
 - EXCELLENT EDUCATION
 - BETTER BUILDINGS
 - SMALLER CLASSES
 - MORE CHOICE IN CURRICULUM

There was a lot of discussion around how to fund these measures so in the end it was decided that the group already had unlimited funding. Looking at one of these areas, you discussed how you would know that your measures to bring about a state where nobody was deprived were working.

You decided

the main way you would know there was no deprivation would be by SEEING (no homeless on the streets, no empty properties, less crime, better area for children). Also RULES to ensure your

measures were in place.

At the end of the session , feedback was - you found it interesting, you didn't realise you were interested in politics, you didn't all agree with each other about the steps along the way to your aims, although the aims themselves were fairly easily agreed on. There were different ideas about where the money could come from to fund these measures.

The trainers then linked the exercises to seeing if something is achieving its aims - BROAD AIM, OBJECTIVES, HOW DO YOU KNOW IF THESE
HAVE BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE

BASIC RESEARCH SKILLS

Summary sheet

Session 2

Exercise 1

You said positive experiences over the last couple of months in a community context were:

STOPPED DRINKING/ AWAY WITH OTHER
PROJECT/ PARTY/ FOCUS MEETING/ BLUES
NIGHT/ PARTY/ WEEKEND AWAY/ JUMBLE
SALE/ METRO CENTRE/ NIGHT OUT/
COURSE/ AWAY WITH DARTS TEAM

You said the elements that made these experiences positive were:

RELAXING/ PARTICIPATION OF OTHERS/
FUN/ ATMOSPHERE/ CHANGE OF SCENERY/
MEETING NEW PEOPLE/ ALCOHOL/
ENJOYMENT/ CHALLENGE/ GOOD
COMPANY/ WATCHING OTHERS/ TAKING
PART/ VENUE/ KIDS LOVED IT/ GOOD
LAUGH/ SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT/
DRAWINGS/ WINNING / BARGAINS/ TIME
SPAN/ FRIENDSHIPS/ ENTERTAINMENT/
KNOWLEDGE/ CREATING NEW THINGS/
SEEING PEOPLE IN A NEW LIGHT

Exercise 2

You said the elements that made up a good school were:

DISCIPLINE/ HAPPY KIDS/ GOOD
TEACHERS/ PARENT TEACHER FEEDBACK
LAYOUT OF LEARNING/ ENVIRONMENT/
ATMOSPHERE/ RAPPORT WITH TEACHERS
OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES/ REPUTATION
CLEANLINESS/ VISIBLE HEAD TEACHER/
RELIGION/ CONVENIENCE/ SMALL CLASS
SIZES/ SUPPORT WORKERS

Exercise 3

You looked at the policies you had decided upon last week that would make your three wishes for the country happen and then thought again about how you would know if they were happening.

You decided that the main way would be by SEEING

You then looked at the following FILM/CRECHE /TRAINING COURSE/ NIGHT OUT to see how you would judge if these different activities had been successful

You said

FILM

TRAINING COURSE

ATTENDANCE
PEOPLES' OPINIONS
PUBLICITY
FINANCIAL LOSS OR GAIN

ATTENDANCE
ACHIEVEMENT
KNOWLEDGE GAINED
FURTHER TRAINING
FEEDBACK
RESULTS

CRECHE

NIGHT OUT

ATTENDANCE
JOINT PARENTS AND
CHILDREN'S OPINIONS
VARIED ACTIVITIES
FINANCIAL LOSS OR GAIN
PEOPLES OPINIONS
ENJOYMENT LEVELS

ATTENDANCE
RAPPORT
VENUE
ATMOSPHERE
HAPPY VIBES

The trainer pulled these elements together as they relate to the main methods of research

SEEING (OBSERVATION)
COUNTING (QUANTITATIVE)
ASKING (QUALITATIVE)
Experiment was also mentioned

Areas covered so far:

BROAD AIM/ OBJECTIVES/ WHAT MIGHT WE MEASURE?/ DIFFERENT WAYS OF GETTING INFORMATION

You were asked if you would like any further information about the above areas. You said yes and asked for the information to be presented in normal English with fancy words in brackets. (This wasn't actually finished and in retrospect I would photocopy out of an GCSE textbook and adapt due to need for accuracy, simplicity and stimulation to very differing abilities. More question format round topic area.

BASIC RESEARCH SKILLS FOR USERS OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS

SESSION 3

Aim: to give participants information on evaluation, research methods relating to world views, and methods commonly used with quantitative and qualitative techniques

to clarify different sorts of information and what they are relevant to for participants to experience carrying out different sorts of interviews

Method: small groupwork and roleplay

EXERCISE 1

Participants split into pairs

One person is a headteacher, the other is a pupil. The aim is to interview each other

When you are the headteacher interviewing the pupil - you are concerned about this pupil, because of the sudden decline in their schoolwork and are fishing for why and if you can help. When you are the pupil being interviewed you need to make up some story as to why your work has been so affected all of a sudden, whether or not you choose to tell the head is up to you.

When you are the pupil interviewing the headteacher, you are doing a project for your schoolwork. The sort of information you want to know is about how successful the school is as a whole. The project counts for 30% of your end of year mark so you may want to think about what sort of questions you need to ask in advance. The headteacher will answer your questions helpfully and as fully as possible.

Each person has a go in each role. It is not important that any of the information given is correct, just make it up or use the attached sheet for information.

When you have both interviewed each other, have a think together about what sort of information you got from the interview and also how you went about letting the other person to talk to you. Was it easy to get them going? Was there some information they talked freely about and other areas where this didn't happen? What would have caused this?

The pairs feedback to the group

Trainer picks up threads that have come out relating to different sorts of information and interview styles.

BREAK

EXERCISE 2

At the last management committee meeting we looked at areas of the project's work people thought were more or less important. These serve as the broad aims of the project. Here is a list of them.

Split into groups and discuss which of the project's activities, fit into which item on the list? Is there any area that doesn't? Have we missed something off the list to start with? Feedback.

EXERCISE 3

Just as you were thinking about how you would go about seeing if the film/creche/training course were doing what they were meant to, how would you go about getting this information in relation to the whole project? To begin with, you could just pick one activity off the list

Feedback and discussion

Interview sheet (amended)

We are trying to find out what local parents get put of the parents centre so we can try to make it easier to use. The information we get from this interview will help us to do this. the interviews are confidential in that we are only recording your gender, age group and the ages of your children, not your name. The completed forms will be looked through bywho are working on this together.

1. How did you hear about the Parents Centre?
2. What made you come/stops you coming?
3. What do you enjoy most about the Parents Centre?
4. What have you got out of it?
5. What has your child/children got out of it?
6. How do you feel about the Parents Centre in general?
7. What can we do to make it easier for more parents to use the centre?
8. Finally, what would you like to see on in the Parents Centre - anything you can think of?

ASHFIELD PARENTS CENTRE

[INTERVIEW SHEET]
- ORIGINAL

**Participative Evaluation
Survey to find out
if they use the Parents Centre
what they use
how they feel about it.**

1) Have you ever used the Parents Centre

Explore whatever the answer

2) What have they got out of the facilities they have used

Explore there answer for both adult and child

3) How do you feel about the Parents Centre in genera

4) What are your views on the Parents Centre as a whole

age group

nu of kids

m/f

ages

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